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Date: 27.01.2025

Dear Member

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2025

The Scrutiny Committee Chairman has approved consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as consideration of this item could not be reasonably delayed until the next scheduled meeting.

This supplement pack contains information relating to a call-in of decision 24/00093 which was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No

E1 **Call-in of Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs (Pages 1 - 144)**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Watts', is written over a light grey circular stamp.

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel

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By: Anna Taylor, Scrutiny Research Officer
To: Scrutiny Committee, 29 January 2025
Subject: **Call-in of Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs**

Summary: This decision, taken on 17 January 2025, has been called-in to the Scrutiny Committee by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis.

Background

1. Decision 24/00093 – Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs was, prior to formal progression, debated at Full Council via a Petition Debate on 7 November 2024. Council resolved the following:

Council recognises that this petition represents significant local opinion regarding the proposed decision to not recommission Family Hub Services at Seashells and asks the Cabinet Member to take that into consideration in addition to the consultation report, and detailed financial analysis, before taking the decision.

2. The decision was later presented as a proposal to the CYPE Cabinet Committee on 21 November. The Cabinet Committee resolved to make a specific recommendation to the Cabinet Member as follows:

The committee recommends that the decision be delayed until the new government funding is confirmed and that there be a temporary extension of contract, subject to it being legally viable;

That a valuation of the buildings be undertaken;

And, that an update be brought to the next meeting.

3. The Cabinet Member reported on the proposed decision during their Cabinet Member updates at the CYPE Cabinet Committee meeting on 16 January 2025 and the decision was taken by the Cabinet Member on 17 January 2025.
4. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins (Labour Group) and Mr Barry Lewis (Green & Independent Group), thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political groups.
5. The reasons of the call-in were duly assessed by Democratic Services, including a review of the reasons given by those Members calling in the decision and an investigation into whether any issues raised in the call-in were adequately addressed by the decision paperwork, committee reports, responses to written

questions or committee debate. The results of this review were considered by the Democratic Services Manager and the call-in was determined to be valid under the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution. Call-in reasons must be clear, correct and align to one or more of the following criteria under s17.67 of the Constitution:

Members can call-in a decision for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework,
- (b) The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget,
- (c) The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5, and/or
- (d) The decision was not taken in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 12.

6. The full call-in request is set out in the attached document (a), submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis. While not all aspects of the call-in were considered valid, particular points set out within the call-in that meet the relevant criteria are highlighted below:

'Reason one: Best Value Duty' as it is set out in the call-in document, highlights the requirement for decisions to evidence consideration of best value. This is addressed to a significant degree as the reports explore detailed consideration of various options and financial implications along with considering needs assessment comparisons across other Wards. However, recognising the significant public interest in the community value aspect for this particular decision, more explicit explanations relating to how Community Value was considered would provide clarity.

'Reason five: Explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions', as it is set out in the call-in document, highlights a range of arguable information gaps and technical queries. While the majority of these do not necessarily meet the call-in criteria, the assertion that further clarification is needed on the consideration around potential use of Year 4 Family Hub funding and the materiality of the legal or procurement risks on alternative options are best explored by the Scrutiny Committee, recognising the prior Cabinet Committee recommendation.

Process

7. As set out in the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. In determining the validity of any call-in, no judgement is made by Democratic Services as to whether the decision itself is flawed, inappropriate or invalid. Similarly, where some individual reasons submitted for an overall valid call-in are not assessed as valid, this does not mean they merit no consideration as part of any subsequent call-in meeting. Paragraph 6 of this report does not indicate endorsement or agreement with the challenges made in the call-in – this report

only confirms that the relevant valid points set out in the call-in are not all completely addressed through the available documentation and previous debate. It should be highlighted that the decision documentation is detailed, thorough and extensive on a range of the key considerations relating to the decision. However, the call-in identified elements that merit further consideration or clarification. In accordance with the call-in arrangements, it is therefore for Members, via the Scrutiny Committee, to determine whether any reconsideration of the decision is necessary and appropriate.

8. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
9. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already available and the response from the Executive given at the meeting, giving due regard to the information made available during questioning and discussion on this item.
10. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Recommendation – Options for the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee may:

- a) make no comments
- b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
- c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments; or
- d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

Attached documents

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis.
- b) [24-00093 - Decision Report](#)
- c) [24-00093 - Record of Decision](#)
- d) [Appendix 1 Service Offer Comparison](#)
- e) [Appendix 2 Commissioned Family Hub Contracts Consultation Report](#)
- f) [Appendix 3 Draft Responses to Consultation Feedback](#)
- g) [Appendix 4 Commissioned Family Hub Contracts Decision EqIA](#)

Background documents

- a) [Agenda for County Council on Thursday, 7th November, 2024, 10.00 am](#)
- b) [Agenda for Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on Thursday, 21st November, 2024, 2.00 pm](#)

Contact Details

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Call-in Request for Executive Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs

Proposer: Ms Mel Dawkins

Seconder: Mr Barry Lewis

Reasons for calling in the decision:

Reason one: The decision is not in line with Council's Policy Framework.

This decision is not in accordance with the Council's primary Policy Framework, Securing Kent's Future, which states that the 'statutory Best Value duty must frame all financial, service and policy decisions, and services must pro-actively evidence the best value considerations in all decisions.' This decision's report mitigated data relating to service usage within Swale and Thanet, therefore not evidencing all best value considerations as the Best Value Duty is also concerned with 'efficiency and effectiveness.' ^(OBJ) Best value does not simply mean the cheapest option, it should also focus on maximising public benefit.

Through data provided by CYPE it is clear via footfall that Seashells and Millmead provide the best value to their local communities when compared to the alternative local Family Hubs. Between 1st April 2024 and 30th November 2024, Seashells reached 1,820 clients between 0 – 19 years old, totalling 25% more clients than the surrounding 6 Family Hubs in Swale combined. Within the same period, Millmead reached 731 clients of the same age range, whilst the surrounding 7 Family Hubs reached a combined number of clients of 729. Although the individual contracts for Seashells and Millmead are larger than the neighbouring Family Hubs, the data provided by CYPE, available in the table below, clearly demonstrates that the average cost per client, attendee, and session at Seashells and Millmead are significantly lower than the neighbouring Family Hubs. This demonstrates that, through resident popularity, Seashells and Millmead provide the best value to KCC financially and the best value to residents though the number of families reached.

Swale	Average cost per client per centre	Average cost per attendee per centre	Average cost per session per centre
Surrounding 6 Family Hubs	£666.98	£213.61	£1,829.52
Seashells	£117.58	£31.75	£547.31

Thanet	Average cost per client per centre	Average cost per attendee per centre	Average cost per session per centre
Surrounding 7 Family Hubs	£1,016.46	£349.53	£2,259.15
Millmead	£318.88	£128.86	£1,099.53

Furthermore, KCC has received significant community response to the proposed ceasing of funding for these services with the consultation, receiving 1,016 responses and the *Save our Seashells* petition receiving over 6,000 signatures, triggering a debate at Full Council. During this debate at Council, it was agreed by Members that the:

Council recognises that this petition represents significant local opinion regarding the proposed decision to not recommission Family Hub Services at Seashells and asks the Cabinet Member to take that into consideration in addition to the consultation report, and detailed financial analysis, before taking the decision.

As demonstrated above, the decision report fails to consider Best Value outside of contract value and fails to consider which Family Hub residents believe to provide Best Value to their community. The decision does not actively consider or demonstrate the other methods, such as footfall, which could be used to establish whether a service is providing, or even exceeding, its expected value. To add to this, although the Council agreed that the Cabinet Member should consider the significant local response demonstrated by the petition and consultation responses, this does not appear to have been considered within the Council's evaluation of best value. It is clear how important and valuable both Millmead and Seashells Family Hubs are to their respective local communities, and how effective their work is, yet the decision report fails to adequately take this into account under the statutory best value duty.

Reason two: The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget.

This decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget as although the decision report states that through the ceasing of these individual contracts, the Council will save £426k annually, it does not consider any of the additional financial pressures KCC will incur as a consequence, contradicting the previously mentioned agreed motion for the Cabinet Member to provide a 'detailed financial analysis'. Moreover, the agreed Council budget in February 2024 did not include the ceasing of these commissioned services in Millmead and Seashells and instead stated that the focus would be on the delivery of the Government's Family Hub Programme and services would be 'developed in partnership with parents and young people', which is in contrary to this decision.

The average wage for a Family Hub Support Worker and Practitioner is £26,386, therefore the cost of an additional worker for Cliftonville, Northdown and Six Bells alone in Margate would be £79,157. Based on the figures provided earlier in this document, if those that currently attend Millmead Family Hub move to another Family Hub in Thanet this would create a service pressure that would require extra staff members to manage. Similarly, the surrounding Family Hubs in Swale will require additional staff members to manage the additional pressure these services will incur following the closure of Seashells. Following on from this, although it has been stated that infant feeding support for mothers will be provided for those who are impacted by this proposal, no clear plans regarding this additional support have been outlined. As the comparative services are not ready as demonstrated in the service offer comparison, this could lead to further inequality, pressures on other services and financial impacts to KCC.

Additionally, in response to the concerns expressed during the consultation period regarding the cost of travel being a barrier for those currently attending Millmead, KCC has offered to pay the bus ticket price for those unable to do so themselves. The decision report states that at Millmead, 1,449 clients attended a session in 2023/24 - if the same number of clients attended a session at another centre in Margate following Millmead's closure, this could cost KCC an additional £5,796 (based on a £4 ticket price), plus the administration fee of providing this refund.

Furthermore, an additional grant of £4.1m has recently been provided to KCC by central Government to 'continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs' and to deliver on the governments ambition 'to give all children the best start in life',¹ and could therefore be used to assist with funding this vital service to the local community and achieving the Council's ambitions as set out in the budget agreed in 2024. Should KCC require further detail on the purpose of this funding, this decision should be postponed until certainty can be provided to Members.

Reason three: Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers and presumption in favour of openness.

As previously referenced, during Full Council on the 7th November 2024, the Council agreed that to make an appropriate decision, the Cabinet Member must have 'all of the information before her', which included 'Any of the unknowns that may come forward from government', along with the *Save our Seashells* petition, KCC consultation, the Full Council debate and discussion at CYPE Committee.² However, this information has not been presented in the covering report and associated information. This, as a result, does not provide assurance to the Council that the Cabinet Member has all the information before them to take an informed and transparent decision.

Furthermore, the record of this County Council discussion and proposal is missing from the record of decision, along with its associated request. A brief statement is made in the report to the CYPE Cabinet Committee discussion, but comparison of the paperwork presented on the financial assessments shows no material difference between the Proposed Record of Decision, the Cabinet Committee Report, and the final Record of Decision (ROD) paperwork. It is understood that further financial assessments are available but have not been presented to Members and may require further transparent scrutiny to ensure that the Cabinet Member is informed and that they are taking the decision in line with the constitutional principles of decision-making.

Reason four: The decision is not taken in accordance with the legal arrangements in Section 12 of the constitution:

During the discussions at CYPE Cabinet Committee, the Cabinet Member agreed to review any legal advice in relation to a further extension of contracts to provide greater clarity on this option. However, any advice or reasoning established has not been provided to Members, other than through very minimal reference within the ROD which states, 'it is not possible for KCC to unilaterally extend the current contracts as there is no power to do so.' This is an incomplete statement, which provides no further clarification or reasoning for Members other than a reference to 'no power.' Numerous contracts across KCC Directorates have had extensions in the past,

¹ HM Treasury (2024), *Autumn Budget 2024 – Fixing Foundations to Deliver Change*, pg. 84.

² Kent County Council (2024), *County Council Minutes*. Available at: [Printed Minutes 7th-Nov-2024, County Council](#)

therefore the exact limitations in relation to this contract must be detailed to Members, and shared if possible, to allow for transparency and demonstrate informed decision making.

Reason five: Explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions.

Following on from the concerns discussed above, this call-in seeks further information and clarification on the below queries and asks that these be provided in writing to explain the options considered and the reasoning behind this:

- Complete funding plans and analysis which details the cost of service delivered at the proposed new family hubs for the number of service users at Seashells and Millmead, including the capital spend to make the buildings fit for purpose.
- Full disclosure regarding the existing contracts and contract extension requirements.
- Full details regarding what the £4.1 million additional family hub funding can be used for, including all correspondents.
- Full disclosure regarding all the advice Officers have provided the Cabinet Member, including the risk analysis for the proposal.
- Detailed information regarding what services will be provided, including outreach provision, if this decision is actioned.

This decision and the associated decision report lacks transparency without the above information being clearly provided to Members, and we therefore do not believe that an accurate and informed decision can be made. This is particularly important following the additional funding provided by central government which may result in further options emerging, which have not yet been outlined or fully considered by Members.

Desired outcome of this call-in:

We request that the Scrutiny Committee recommends that the implementation of the decision be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Subject: Commissioned Family Hub Contracts

Decision no: 24/00093

Key Decision : For the reason that:

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Sheppey
Margate

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: Following wider decisions about KCC's Family Hub model and network of in-house Family Hub locations, officers have explored a proposal which would mean we do not renew KCC's two Commissioned Family Hub contracts when the current contracts come to an end on 31 March 2025.

A public consultation sought the views of service users and partners on the proposal and the suggested alternative arrangements to provide Family Hub services.

Members are asked to consider the balance of the assessed impact of this proposal, the response to the consultation and the overarching priority policy position.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services is asked to:

APPROVE the proposal to not re-commission the Family Hub services that are currently provided at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE any activity requiring capital spend as set out in the report to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, and Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services.

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services to explore the option for Kent County Council to deliver outreach Family Hub services from Seashells and Millmead centres when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to finalising, entering into, concluding or managing any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 KCC commissions two providers to deliver Family Hub services: Millmead Family Hub in Thanet and Seashells Family Hub on the Isle of Sheppey. The rest of the Family Hub network is delivered by our in-house service which was subject to the previous Family Hub Model Key Decision [23/00092](#).
- 1.2 As part of the wider implementation of the Family Hub Programme, the two remaining commissioned centres, Millmead and Seashells, have transitioned from the Children Centre contracts to Family Hub contracts. Both centres were pilot locations during the implementation of the Family Hub model. The existing contracts end on the 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 Following wider decisions about KCC's Family Hub model and network of in-house Family Hub locations, a public consultation has sought views on a draft proposal to not renew the two commissioned Family Hub contracts when they come to their end on 31 March 2025. The proposal sets out that the Family Hub provision will be delivered from alternative locations for current users of each site.
- 1.4 This report sets out the implications of not reprocurring the commissioned Family Hub contracts. The accompanying debate at committee will inform any eventual decision to be made by the Cabinet Member.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It should be noted that the proposal not to renew the contracts when they end in March 2025 is in no way a reflection of the quality of service delivered by either of the commissioned providers. In the year 2023/24, 1869 families attended sessions at Seashells and 1449 attended sessions at Millmead. The Equality Impact Assessment included within the supporting documentation goes into more detail about the assessed impacts on protected characteristics.
- 2.2 The contracts for the two Commissioned Children's Centres were tendered and awarded in 2020 for a period of 12 months. The services were subject to Directly Awarded contracts from April 2021 to March 2022 under Covid-19 guidance. A Key Decision (21/00086) was taken on 10 November 2021 to directly award contracts to the existing providers for a further year until 31 March 2023. A further Key Decision (22/00108) facilitated an additional 12-month extension, meaning the contracts ended on 31 March 2023.
- 2.3 Both sites have been part of the Family Hub model transformation and have been pilot sites within the implementation of the new model.
- 2.4 To minimise duplication of provision and to ensure that future specifications complimented the Family Hub model being developed, the procurement of new commissioned Children Centres was delayed. In 2024, a further Direct Award was made to the two centres as Family Hubs. The terms and conditions of this contract were continued from the previous contract and require a six-month notice period. Therefore, the current contracts end on 31 March 2025. Indicative notice of the end of the contracts was given to each provider in July 2024, subject to the outcome of the consultation and any resulting Key Decision.
- 2.5 Further extension of these contracts is not possible, other than to cover the period of procurement for new contracts, subject to any decision made by the Cabinet Member.
- 2.6 Any procurement would be open to all potential providers and whilst previous tenders have not received bids from alternative providers, it cannot be guaranteed that the current providers will win any future procurement. Therefore, there would still be a risk in place to both organisations regarding their future viability.
- 2.7 In November 2023, KCC Cabinet took decision 23/00092 to implement the Family Hub model across the County. At the time, that included transformation and efficiency plans for 56 Family Hub locations across Kent not including the two Commissioned centres, Millmead and Seashells (in line with the Kent Communities Programme decision 23/00101, also from November 2023).
- 2.8 Due to the fact that Millmead and Seashells Family Hubs are both externally commissioned, they were not included within the scope of the Kent Communities Programme analysis.

- 2.9 There has therefore been a sequence of decisions about where and how to deliver Open Access (now Family Hub) services, which have realised savings against what was the previous Family Hub budget as set out in the MTFP (more detail in the next section). Firstly, decisions were made that considered the Family Hub model itself and the buildings used to deliver the services in-house. These decisions have been implemented, delivering savings through model redesign, staff restructure and building rationalisation. With the commissioned contracts ending in March 2025, the next consideration in sequence is whether to renew these contracts or whether service provision should be delivered differently.

3. RATIONALE - FINANCIAL AND MODEL CONSIDERATIONS

Financial: Securing Kent's Future

- 3.1 On 17 August 2023, Cabinet agreed the provisions set out in the report 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy and Financial Reporting'. This report explained that there has been *'significant deterioration in the financial and operating landscape facing the Council since Framing Kent's Future was adopted.'* It goes on to explain that there needs to be *'a strong focus from elected Members, the Corporate Management Team, Directors, Heads of Service and all our staff to recognise that this spending challenge is now the fundamental policy priority of the council and to respond accordingly.'* On 5 October 2023, Cabinet considered 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy'. This report set out the Council's strategy for achieving both in-year and future year savings to assure a more sustainable financial position for the Authority and set out new strategic objectives focused on putting the Council on a financially sustainable footing.
- 3.2 As set out in the Budget Recovery Plan (Cabinet – October 2023), the financial challenge cannot be overstated. Every decision the Council takes needs to be considered in terms of this fundamental policy priority. Failure to do so risks the need for more drastic action in order to balance the Council's budget.
- 3.3 The Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Plan sets out information that is relevant to any decision on the future of the commissioned Family Hub contracts.' The Budget Recovery Strategy sets out a number of objectives including the following: *'Objective 2: Delivering savings from identified opportunity areas to set a sustainable 2024/25 budget and MTFP'*. Point 6.7 of the Strategy sets out that nearly three quarters of the Council's spend is with third party providers and that there is a need to review these contracts in light of 'Securing Kent's Future'. The MTFP, as agreed at Full Council during the Budget meeting on 19 February 2024 set out (in appendix G of the papers for the meeting) that across the 24/25 and 25/26 financial years a target of £2m will be saved as part of a 'Review of open access services in light of implementing the Family Hub model.' With this in mind, any decision by members on the future of the commissioned Family Hub contracts need to give due consideration to the revised policy framework and the financial challenge facing the Council, balancing this consideration against the potential impact of changes on residents and the consultation response.

Model Considerations

- 3.4 As part of the Family Hub Model decision 23/00092 made in November 2023, KCC moved towards a more targeted offer, as opposed to the previous universal offer. There is also currently an imbalance in the Family Hub delivery model in Kent and resultant duplication of costs for the Council. Currently, there are 50 Family Hub sites across the county, including within Swale and Thanet, which are staffed by KCC Family Hub practitioners. These centres provide Family Hub services for families in Kent funded from the CYPE base budget. These two commissioned centres are the only two centres that are externally commissioned. These centres link in with partners such as Health and VCS organisations. However, the links to other KCC ICS/Early Help services are not as strong as within the rest of the KCC in-house network. We are also duplicating cost in terms of management (each District in Kent has a KCC District Manager for example), HR, IT and finance support through the commissioning of the two centres.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal under consideration is to not renew the two contracts when they reach the end of their current term on 31 March 2025. The table below sets out the annual cost of each of the existing contracts.

Centre	Area	Contract End Date	Contract value per Annum
Millmead	Margate	31/03/2025	£222,127.44
Seashells	Sheerness	31/03/2025	£204,302.16
Totals			£426,429.60

Millmead

- 4.2 Family Hub services would be provided from existing alternative sites within the in-house KCC Family Hub network. In relation to Millmead, there are three alternative sites all within 1.5 miles from the Millmead centre (Cliftonville Family Hub, 1.3 miles away; Margate Family Hub, 1.4 miles away and Northdown Road Family Hub, 1.5 miles away).
- 4.3 All three of these sites were included within the Kent Communities Programme decision as Family Hub locations and are currently operational Family Hubs.
- 4.4 The consultation sets out clearly that while we cannot deliver a 'like-for-like' service offer across the alternative locations, a comparable service will be available within the network of local in-house Family Hubs. Appendix 1 sets out the services currently on offer at Millmead under the Family Hub contract and the services available at the alternative sites proposed.

Seashells

- 4.5 In relation to Seashells the alternative provision would be from with the Sheppey Gateway which is 0.2 miles away from the Seashells centre. The Sheppey Gateway already delivers some sessions within the library space that

are complimentary to the Family Hub offer (for example Birth Registrations) as well as a range of other services from KCC, Swale Borough Council and other partners.

- 4.6 The consultation set out clearly that while we cannot deliver a ‘like-for-like’ service offer from the Sheerness Gateway, a comparable service will be available. As set out below, analysis shows that the current Family Hub service includes 14 hours of activity per week at Seashells and 9 hours of activity per week at Millmead that are directly commissioned under the contract. These hours can be accommodated at the alternative sites identified (Sheppey Gateway for Seashells and the three nearby in-house Family Hubs in Margate for Millmead). Vacancies held within the Family Hub staff will accommodate the staff eligible for TUPE to deliver these sessions at the alternative locations. Appendix 1 sets out the services currently on offer at Seashells under the Family Hub contract and the services that are proposed at the Gateway.
- 4.7 It is important to note that the Family Hub offer across each District is responsive and will continue to flex in response to the identified service need within each community. This may include outreach provision which the service delivers in the community when it is identified that provision other than at Family Hub buildings is most appropriate.

Need

- 4.8 For benchmarking purposes, a comparison of the number of KCC Family Hub locations per 10,000 people aged 0-19 has been made against other Family Hub authorities. The comparison was only made against authorities with similar scale populations of 0-19 year olds and does not include any authority with a population lower than 290,000 (when rounded to the nearest 10,000). This comparison demonstrates that KCC has 1.3 Family Hubs per 10,000 people aged 0-19. This is the highest proportion of Family Hubs per 10,000 people aged 0-19 when compared to other authorities with similar quantum of 0-19 year olds, as the table below demonstrates:

Authority	0-19 Year Olds (to nearest 10,000)	Total Family Hub Sites	Family Hubs per 10,000 0-19 Year Olds
Kent	370,000	50	1.3
Essex	340,000	35	1.03
Birmingham	330,000	22	0.67
Surrey	290,000	21	0.72

- 4.9 When comparing the number of Family Hubs per 10,000 people aged 0-19 across all Family Hub authorities regardless of 0-19 population size, the average is 1.3 hubs per 10,000 0-19 year olds. This means that, on a county-wide basis, Kent is in line with the average across the country. This does not, however, replace the need for local analysis.

4.10 For further context, the table below demonstrates that Thanet and Swale receive the highest proportion of the overall Family Hub budget, in recognition of the levels of need for the service in these locations. Figures quoted are excluding the cost of the current commissioned contracts.

Overall Family Hub Budget across all 12 Kent Districts	£7.3m	100%
Thanet	£741k	10.1%
Swale	£719k	9.8%
Ashford	£624k	8.5%
Canterbury	£671k	9.1%
Dartford	£616k	8.4%
Dover	£623k	8.5%
Folkestone and Hythe	£584k	8%
Gravesham	£591k	8%
Maidstone	£674k	9.2%
Sevenoaks	£452k	6.1%
Tonbridge and Malling	£528k	7.2%
Tunbridge Wells	£470k	6.4%

4.11 The section below details the response to the public consultation regarding the future of the provision offered by the two commissioned Family Hubs. One key theme emerging from the feedback received is the high level of deprivation present within each of the wards in which the two centres are located. Millmead is situated in Dane Valley Ward in Thanet and Seashells is within Sheerness Ward in Swale.

4.12 There are available data sets that demonstrate the high level of deprivation in these two wards. Data published in the [Kent Analytics Statistical Bulletin \(April 2024\) – Children in Poverty](#) includes the following table which shows that Dane Valley (Millmead) is the ward with the fifth highest percentage of children in relative low-income families in Kent for the 2022/23 year. Table 14 sets out the wards with the highest % of children in relative low-income families.

Table 14: Top ten wards in Kent with highest percentage children in relative low-income families, 2022/23

Ward Name	District	Number	%
Upper Weald	Ashford	150	32.2%
Town & Castle	Dover	489	31.1%
St Radigunds	Dover	527	30.2%
Newington	Thanet	405	28.4%
Dane Valley	Thanet	563	28.2%
Cliftonville West	Thanet	746	27.5%
Folkestone Harbour	Folkestone & Hythe	388	26.9%
Buckland	Dover	442	26.9%
Tower Hamlets	Dover	300	26.5%
Walland & Denge Marsh	Folkestone & Hythe	360	25.9%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore; ONS MYPE

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

- 4.13 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data is available for every ward in the County. The most recent IMD data is from 2019 and therefore is not entirely indicative of the current situation, however the data does reinforce the level of deprivation prevalent in each of the two wards. Sheerness (Seashells) has the second highest IMD score, and Dane Valley (Millmead) has the fifth highest IMD score in the County. The table below sets details the five wards with the highest IMD scores in Kent.

Ward	Score	Rank (out of 290 Kent wards)
Margate Central	64.47	1
Sheerness (Seashells)	58.45	2
Cliftonville West	57.63	3
Newington	52.54	4
Dane Valley (Millmead)	47.21	5

- 4.14 Combined with the response from the consultation (detailed below) the data outlined above shows that the two wards in question experience high levels of deprivation. Patterns of deprivation have been prevalent within these communities consistently for many years. There are additional indicators regarding levels of crime and anti-social behaviour as well as domestic abuse and drug and alcohol dependence. All of which combine to demonstrate the levels of deprivation and social issues faced within these communities.

Members should have appropriate regard to these local factors. However, notwithstanding this we assess that there would be sufficient provision to meet

need in the areas currently serviced by the commissioned centres, taking into account existing and planned alternative provision.

4.15 For additional context, the Kent Communities Programme (KCP) decision taken in November 2023 ([23/00101](#)) proposed a network of Family Hub buildings. Section 3 of the KCP report sets out the Needs Framework which assessed the level of need within each ward across the County by considering the following data:

- Deprivation
- % of the population aged 0-15
- Deprivation Affecting Children
- % of reception age children who are overweight or obese
- % of deliveries to teenage mothers
- % of low-birth-weight live babies
- % of people over 65 living alone
- Deprivation Affecting Older People
- Long term unemployment
- Ethnic diversity
- % of pupils achieving a pass in English and Maths at GCSE
- % of people who report a long-term illness or disability
- Population growth
- Population density
- Digital exclusion
- Transport connectivity
- Broadband speed

The available data was combined across each of the metrics listed above and combined to give an overall 'Need Score' for each ward. These scores then informed the modelling with the KCC services (including the Family Hub service) to determine where services should be located to meet the need identified. The Needs Framework was designed to determine which KCC-owned assets were required to meet the need identified in each location.

4.16 Analysis shows that the current Family Hub service includes 14 hours of activity per week at Seashells and 9 hours of activity per week at Millmead that are directly commissioned under the contract. These hours can be accommodated at the alternative sites identified (Sheppey Gateway for Seashells and the three nearby in-house Family Hubs in Margate for Millmead). Vacancies held within the Family Hub staff will accommodate the staff eligible for TUPE to deliver these sessions at the alternative locations.

4.17 Local transport analysis in relation to Millmead shows that currently 54,189 households are within a 35 minute bus journey from the Millmead centre. All of these households are within a 35 minute bus journey of an alternative, in-house Family Hub location. The Sheppey Gateway is a five-minute walk from the Seashells centre and is serviced by the same public transport network. Given the need identified in through the metrics detailed above, it is important to retain the service for local residents and whilst in relation to Millmead the proposal suggests the use of the alternative Family Hub locations in Margate, no such

provision already exists for Seashells. Therefore the proposal is to make use of the Gateway location to retain the service for residents that need it.

- 4.18 It is also relevant to note that providing sufficient children's centres to meet local need does not require KCC to situate children's centres in specific wards with high levels of need, although needs in those wards must be met. For example, when making comparisons to other areas of deprivation as highlighted in Table 14 above, it is noted that of the four wards identified with higher levels of deprivation than Dane Valley, only two of them (Town and Castle, Dover and Newington, Thanet) have a Family Hub in the ward. Neither Upper Weald or St Radigunds have a Family Hub site directly in the ward.
- 4.19 When considering any potential decision, Members are asked to balance all relevant factors, including the need of the area, the response to the consultation and the overarching priority policy position of the Council as we address the financial challenge that we face.

5. CONSULTATION

Consultation Process

- 5.1 In line with the Childcare Act 2006 and children's centre statutory guidance, KCC has undertaken a public consultation to seek the views of service users, residents, and professional partners on the proposal not to renew the contracts when they end in March 2025. A full consultation report providing an independent analysis of the feedback received is available at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 A public consultation launched on 30 July 2024 and closed on 22 September 2024. The consultation was publicised locally at both Millmead and Seashells, directly to service users. It was also publicised using the Council's standard online promotional platforms and across the Family Hub social media platforms within Thanet and Swale.
- 5.3 There were different options available for people to submit feedback including a paper version of a questionnaire, an online version of the same questionnaire, and easy read version, a separate questionnaire for professionals as well as the consultation email address. Two drop-in sessions were also held for each of the locations. One drop in was held at the Margate Family Hub (one of the proposed alternative locations for Millmead) and one was held at the Millmead Centre itself. Four people attended the drop in at Margate Family Hub, three of whom were elected members. Approximately 50 people attended the session held at Millmead Centre.
- 5.4 In regards to the Seashells centre, a drop in was held at the Sheppey Gateway (the proposed alternative location) and one was held at Seashells itself. 11 people attended the session at the Gateway and approximately 53 people spoke directly to officers at the Seashells centre.
- 5.5 At both sites, further information was collected from members of the public via a 'Post-it Note' feedback display to capture those individuals who did not want to talk to officers directly.

Consultation Response

- 5.6 A total of 1,016 formal questionnaires were returned in response to the consultation. The table below sets out the number of responses for each centre.

Centre	Responses
Millmead	433
Seashells	672
Non-specific/both	99
Total	1,016

- 5.7 We also received letters and representations from partner organisations and residents by email/letter, as well as the verbal feedback from the drop in sessions.
- 5.8 Feedback has been independently analysed and the themes of feedback have been identified within Appendix 2.
- 5.9 Almost all feedback received indicated a strong desire for the contracts to be renewed and the Family Hub services to remain at Seashells and Millmead.
- 5.10 In relation to Millmead specifically, feedback focused on the accessibility of the site for local families, the importance of the centre for wellbeing and safety given the high levels of deprivation, the wider impact that Millmead has, and the inaccessibility of the proposed alternative locations.
- 5.11 In relation to Seashells, the feedback focused on similar themes; the importance of the centre itself to the community, the range of services on offer that may not be replicated at the Gateway, the fact that the centre is welcoming and vital to the development and wellbeing of children and families.
- 5.12 One specific point raised at consultation in relation to Millmead was whether it is justifiable to not renew the Family Hub commission at Millmead (in Dane Valley ward) whilst maintaining three 'in-house' Family Hubs all in close proximity to each other across Margate Central and Cliftonville West wards (Margate Family Hub in Margate Central and Northdown Road and Cliftonville Family Hubs in Cliftonville West). The KCP Need Framework (which KCC used as part of the KCP to review its network of in-house Family Hubs to meet need in each district) showed high levels of comparably high need in all three wards and as the IMD data shows in paragraph 4.13 each of these wards is within the top five most deprived wards in Kent

Ward	Need Score (as part of KCP analysis)	IMD Rank (out of 290 Kent wards)
Dane Valley (Millmead)	69	5
Margate Central	70	1

(Margate Family Hub)		
Cliftonville West (Northdown Road and Cliftonville Family Hubs)	75	3

- 5.13 Whilst there is undoubtedly high need in all three wards, the data suggests higher need in Margate Central and (in particular) Cliftonville West. Additionally, provision will continue to be within reasonable reach of users of Millmead, and support will be provided to help with the transition to new locations. More broadly this is one possible variant of Option 3, which we do not recommend for the reasons set out at paragraph 6.7 below.
- 5.14 One other point that was drawn out of the consultation responses was the claim that the effect of not recommissioning the Family Hub contracts is that the centres would themselves become unsustainable and therefore close. This was a claim made primarily in relation to Millmead. To reiterate, the decision for the Cabinet Member relates only to the Family Hub service commissioned under the contracts. The centres both run nursery provision that is separate from the commissioned contracts and have the ability to bid for additional funding streams. It has also been confirmed that the Millmead Centre has been offered Healthy Living Centre grant money from Public Health under a different funding stream and this has been accepted by the centre, following which they have confirmed that their operations are sustainable.
- 5.15 Officers began giving due consideration to the emerging themes of feedback during the consultation itself; in particular issues around the cost of bus transport. The independent analysis of the feedback confirmed the themes that emerged from the consultation feedback and they have been addressed in Appendix 3, which is a draft consultation response for consideration and approval by members.

Petitions

- 5.16 A petition entitled 'Save Our Seashells' was submitted with over 6,000 signatures. The petition was subject to debate at Full Council on 7 November 2024.
- 5.17 Full Council resolved to recognise the strength of local feeling that the petition represented and asked the Cabinet Member to take this into consideration as well as the consultation report and a detailed financial assessment before taking the decision. The consultation report is included at Appendix 2 and the financial analysis is within section 7 of this report.
- 5.18 The impact of recommissioning the Family Hub services at Seashells is primarily twofold. Firstly, the required saving of £204,302.16 will need to be made elsewhere. Secondly, it would create an imbalance in the system that would not be considered justifiable were members minded to recommission services at one centre and not the other.

5.19 It is worth restating here, that the decision by the Cabinet member relates to the recommissioning of the Family Hub services only. It does not relate to the rest of the services available at the two commissioned centres.

Cabinet Committee Motion

5.20 On 21 November 2024 the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered the proposed decision. The committee passed a motion proposing that:

That the decision be delayed until the new government funding is confirmed and that there be a temporary extension of contract, subject to it being legally viable; That a valuation of the buildings be undertaken; And, that an update be brought to the next meeting.

5.21 In relation to the first part of the motion, officers have repeatedly requested confirmation from the Department for Education civil servants as to the amount of grant money that KCC will be awarded to cover the period April 2025 to March 2026. Officers have also requested confirmation as to what, if any additional delivery requirements and constraints will accompany any additional grant award.

5.22 At the time of writing, there has been no further detail provided by the DfE on the specific amount of year 4 grant award money, or the delivery requirements.

5.23 If theoretically we were able to utilise grant money to recommission the two contracts at their current value, it is still true that the two centres would be out of line with the rest of the Family Hub service mode in Kent, as adopted within decision 23/00092.

5.24 Legal advice has been provided by external legal advisors that confirms it is not possible for KCC to unilaterally extend the current contracts as there is no power to do so.

5.25 The committee also requested valuations be made on the KCC Family Hub sites in Margate:

- Margate Family Hub
- Northdown Road Family Hub
- Cliftonville Family Hub

5.26 Cliftonville Family Hub is not a building owned by KCC and is occupied under a lease that costs circa £54,000 annually including maintenance and utilities.

5.27 Officers have undertaken detailed desktop valuations given the time available to provide information. No assessment of building condition has been made, but figures are provided using standard market assessment techniques. Margate Family Hub has been valued at between £250k - £350k based on market rental values for office/community use and up to £450k for residential use, subject to planning restrictions. Similarly, Northdown Road Family Hub has been valued at

£200k - £250k based on market rental values for office/community use and up to £400k for residential use, subject to planning restrictions.

6. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 This section sets out which alternative options have been considered prior to and following the consultation.
- 6.2 Initially five options were considered ahead of the public consultation. Given the overarching policy priority of the Council (see paragraph 2.1 of this report) the primary objective when considering any option was the impact of that option on the target to achieve the £426k saving detailed within the MTFP.
- 6.3 The five options considered ahead of the consultation were as follows:
- Option 1: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts and provide services within existing KCC locations.
 - Option 2: Reprocure significantly reduced contracts.
 - Option 3: Reprocure comparable contracts and close other Family Hub locations in other areas (as this would save building costs).
 - Option 4: Reprocure comparable contracts and reduce services in alternative Family Hub locations (as this would save service costs).
 - Option 5: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts but find alternative standalone locations for alternative provision.
- 6.4 As set out in Section 5, one of the themes that emerges from the consultation feedback is the importance of having these services available for the communities within the familiar, existing settings of Millmead and Seashells. In response to this feedback we have attempted to explore a sixth option:
- Option 6: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts, but instead hire space for KCC Family Hub staff to deliver the services from within the two settings.
- 6.5 Each option is summarised below and, where appropriate, the reasons why an option has been discounted are set out. Options 1 to 5 were all included in the consultation documentation for respondents to review. Option 6 has been explored in response to the consultation feedback.
- 6.6 Option 1: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts and provide services within existing KCC locations, including additional alternative provision at the Sheppey Gateway. This option is the proposal for discussion by members and was the basis for the public consultation. It is expected that this option will achieve the £426k saving within the MTFP. As set out above, services would be available to residents from alternative locations. This option would provide consistency across the entire Family Hub service as it would mean that the whole provision is in-house. The consultation report and EqIA set out the impact on service users of this option, however it is expected that this option has the greatest impact on service users of all of the options considered. Whilst the opening hours do vary at the three alternative centres in Margate and at the Sheppey Gateway, this is not considered to be an issue as the core Family Hub

activity hours outlined above (14 hours a week at Seashells and 9 hours a week at Millmead) can be accommodated within the opening hours of the alternative sites.

- 6.7 Option 2: Reprocure significantly reduced contracts. This option would not achieve the full saving within the MTFP. It would mean that savings would need to be identified elsewhere to make up the shortfall as renewing the contracts, albeit on a reduced basis, would still require revenue expenditure. This option would also lead to a reduction in services available in the two locations, given the reduced contract value, requiring service users to access these services from alternative locations. There would also remain an inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as we would retain the two commissioned sites while the rest of the Family Hub model is delivered in-house. Currently there are 50 Family Hub sites across the county, including within Swale and Thanet, which are staffed by KCC Family Hub practitioners. These centres provide Family Hub services for families in Kent staffed and funded from the CYPE base budget. By providing these two commissioned centres there is an imbalance in the delivery model as these are the only two centres that are externally commissioned. These centres link in with partners such as Health and VCS organisations. However the links to other KCC ICS/Early Help services are not as strong as within the rest of the KCC in-house network. We are also duplicating cost in terms of management (each District in Kent has a KCC District Manager for example), HR, IT and finance support through the commissioning of the two centres. This option would theoretically bring the offer available in line with the rest of the county as a reduced commission would necessarily require a more targeted, and less universal approach. This would be more in line with the rest of the county model following the Family Hub Decision [23/00092](#).
- 6.8 Option 3: Reprocure comparable contracts and close other Family Hub locations in other areas (this saving building costs). Whilst this option could achieve the full MTFP saving of £426k, it would not meet the saving requirement in the timeframe set out in the MTFP. It would also require alternative savings to be made elsewhere across the network. The Kent Communities Programme and Family Hub Model decisions (both November 2023) set out the network of Family Hub buildings in relation to need, including reduction in the number of children's centres across the county whilst retaining the number of centres required to meet the need in each District. This option would mean the re-procurement of the commissioned contracts, however access to services would be impacted elsewhere given the reduction in buildings to meet the £426k saving. This option would continue the inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as explained in paragraph 6.7. This option would retain the imbalance in service offer across the county and would not align with the more targeted model adopted as a result of decision [23/00092](#).
- 6.9 Option 4: Reprocure comparable contracts and reduce services in alternative Family Hub locations (this saving service costs). This option was not preferred ahead of consultation because whilst it could achieve the full MTFP saving of £426k, it would likely take much longer to do so. It would also require

alternative savings to be made elsewhere across the network. The Kent Communities Programme and Family Hub Model decisions (both November 2023) set out the network of Family Hub buildings in relation to need, including reduction in the number of children’s centres across the county whilst retaining the number of centres required to meet the need in each District. This option would mean the re-procurement of the commissioned contracts, however services would be reduced elsewhere to meet the £426k saving. This option would continue the inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as set out in paragraph 6.7. This option would retain the imbalance in service offer across the county and would not align with the more targeted model adopted as a result of decision 23/00092.

6.10 Option 5: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts but find alternative standalone locations for alternative provision. This would not achieve the full saving within the MTFP. This option would mean that savings would need to be identified elsewhere to make up the shortfall despite the fact the commissioned contracts would not be renewed. This is because revenue would be required to provide the service from other non-KCC locations within the communities. The revenue cost of hiring space locally is estimated at between approximately £130k and £180k per year were we to implement this option for both Seashells and Millmead, or between £65k and £90k for one location. This would represent a pressure on potentially both CYPE and Corporate Landlord budgets. As set out under Option 1, alternative provision is available from within existing KCC buildings (current Family Hubs in the case of Millmead and Sheppey Gateway in relation to Seashells). This option would theoretically bring the offer available in line with the rest of the county as a reduced commission would necessarily require a more targeted, and less universal approach. This would be more in line with the rest of the county model following the Family Hub Decision 23/00092.

6.1 Option 6: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts, but instead hire space for KCC Family Hub staff to deliver the services from within the two settings. This option has been developed in response to the consultation feedback (see Section 5). Many respondents expressed the view that the current settings (Millmead and Seashells) are in themselves important to service users and the communities. There is also the view that the cessation of these two contracts may impact the overall sustainability of the centres. As a response to this feedback officers have sought to understand the opportunity to hire space within the existing centres. This option does not negate the requirement to deliver Family Hub services from the identified alternative locations. This option would mean a shortfall in the saving offered against the MTFP target, as rent would be payable. The following table sets out the approximate rental costs to deliver the number of hours of core service at each of the centres.

Centre	Cost Per Hour	Hours Per Week	Estimated Annual Rental Cost
Seashells	£20	14	£14,560
Millmead	£16	9	£7,488

This is not the preferred option as it would not deliver the full savings as set out in the MTFP. However, this option could be delivered if savings of circa £22k (for instance through unfilled vacancies) were identified so that this option could be delivered within the current financial envelope.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The section above sets out the basic financial implication of each of the options. This section looks at more detail into the financial implications of the proposal.
- 7.2 It is identified earlier in this report that in line with the MTFP which supports the overarching policy position of the Council, across the financial years 24/25 and 25/26 a target of £2m will be saved as part of a 'Review of open access services in light of implementing the Family Hub model.'
- 7.3 The saving achieved under this proposal is the £426k annual cost of the commissioned contracts.
- 7.4 The alternative provision would be delivered within existing Family Hub budgets. In relation to Millmead, there is capacity within the existing alternative proposed Family Hubs to provide the service within the budget envelope for the District (£741k). Of the £741k, the budget for staff salaries within Thanet is £717,400
- 7.5 In respect to Seashells, the alternative provision would be delivered from the Sheppey Gateway. Similarly the provision would be delivered within the budget envelope for Swale (£719k). However, this would be done from the new location of the Sheppey Gateway.
- 7.6 Of the £719k for Swale, £705,600 relates directly to staff salaries. Of this figure, based on the current core Family Hub offer that would be delivered at the Sheppey Gateway we would anticipate £37,353 of the total salary cost would cover the staff time to deliver the service at the Gateway. This would be met from within our existing staffing budget and does not represent an increase or additional pressure.
- 7.7 It is important to note that staffing allocation is not fixed and within the overall budget envelope for the district, staff may move around to deliver services from various locations in the district, as needed. Therefore, if additional need was identified in the future, more staff resource can be diverted to the Gateway (or any other Family Hub location) so long as it stays within the budget envelope for Swale.
- 7.8 Public Health services are also delivered from the Seashells location, outside of the Family Hub commissioned contract. They have been quoted a figure of

£39k to rent space should the commissioned contract not be renewed. They currently have use of space rent free.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 KCC has a statutory duty under Section 5 of the Childcare Act 2006 to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of children's centres (now known as Family Hubs) to meet local need. Local need is the need of parents, prospective parents and young children in Kent. As a service, we are confident that, if adopted, the proposal we have developed would allow KCC to continue to provide sufficient children's centres (now known as Family Hubs) to meet need in the districts affected.
- 8.2 KCC is also required to have regard to the Sure Start children's centre statutory guidance (April 2013). Chapter 2 of the guidance ('Sufficient children's centres') explains that children's centres and their services should be: accessible to all children and families in the area; within reasonable reach of all families, taking into account distance and the availability of transport; targeted at those with a risk of poor outcomes, based on an analysis of local need; meet needs in terms of opening times and availability of services. Furthermore, local authorities should not close an existing children's centre as part of a reorganisation of provision unless they can demonstrate outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected and will not compromise the duty to have sufficient children's centres to meet need. The guidance explains that the starting point should be a presumption against the closure of children's centre.
- 8.3 The same Act requires Local Authorities in England to undertake consultation when considering changes that would result in a Children's Centre (or Family Hub) ceasing to be a Children's Centre (or Family Hub). The consultation process undertaken in relation to this proposal is detail in Section 4.
- 8.4 KCC has a statutory duty under s. 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 to improve the well-being of young children in Kent and reduce inequalities between young children in their area in relation to certain specific matters¹. Under s. 17 of the Children Act 1989, KCC also has a general duty to safeguard and promote the needs of children in need in Kent and promote the upbringing of children in need by their families, by providing an appropriate level and range of services.
- 8.5 KCC also has a statutory duty under s. 11 of the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements for ensuring that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and that any services provided by another person pursuant to arrangements with KCC are provided having regard to that need.
- 8.6 As a service we consider that the proposals are consistent with KCC continuing to fulfil the above statutory duties and with relevant statutory guidance. We

¹ Physical and mental health and emotional well-being; protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation; the contribution made by them to society; and social and economic well-being.

assess that there will continue to be sufficient provision to meet local need on the basis of the analysis set out in Section 4 above including, in particular, the outcome of the needs analysis undertaken as part of the Kent Communities Programme, capacity at the sites from which alternative provision will be delivered to provide additional activities, staff capacity, and local transport analysis. For similar reasons we do not anticipate an adverse impact on outcomes, or on KCC's continued compliance with its wider statutory duties. We anticipate that families who currently access Millmead and Seashells will access provision at alternative sites. Support will be provided to aid families' transition to accessing new locations. Additionally, our broader Family Hub service, including outreach provision, will continue to flex in response to identified need within communities.

- 8.7 In regards to meeting requirements linked to safeguarding for the remainder of the contracts, KCC contract management procedures will be used all the way to the end of the contract period to ensure any statutory safeguarding provisions are upheld.
- 8.8 Staff currently employed by the two providers to deliver activity under the Family Hub contract will be eligible for TUPE transfer within the existing Family Hub service. At the time of writing, KCC HR colleagues have begun discussion with one of the two centres and the other has not fully engaged with the conversation around potential TUPE transfer. Currently the service is holding vacancies across the Family Hub workforce and it is anticipated that staff eligible for TUPE will fill these vacancies should they choose to transfer to KCC.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken in advance of the consultation. The EqIA has been updated following the review of consultation feedback (as outlined in section 5) paying particular attention to any equalities concerns raised within consultation response. The full Equalities Impact Assessment has been included at Appendix 4.
- 9.2 Broadly, the equalities impact of the proposal falls on those residents with the following protected characteristics: gender, age and disability. The full EqIA sets the analysis out in detail for these, and other, protected characteristics. The most significant impact identified is the requirement under the proposals for residents to travel (particularly related to Millmead) further to access services and the impact of attending unfamiliar locations.
- 9.3 Of the six options (all set out in section 6) the highest impact will be felt on Options 1 (the proposal) and Option 5. Options 2, 3, 4 and 6 will have lesser impact on these communities, but that must be balanced by the fact that these options require further actions that will have impacts elsewhere across the county.

- 9.4 Mitigations have been suggested in response to the feedback, including potentially providing reimbursed bus fares for residents accessing a new Family Hub when previously they have used Millmead. Officers will explore the cost and feasibility of providing time-limited support but consider, on the basis of transport analysis, that alternative provision is within reasonable reach and that there is no obligation to provide financial support. Our network of Community Development officer will however be utilised to help residents that require additional support to navigate the transition.
- 9.5 The impacts, when considered alongside the mitigation measures detailed within the EqIA and considered within the overarching policy priority context in which the Council operates, are considered to be justified.
- 9.6 Members are asked to consider the Equalities Impacts on residents with protected characteristics alongside the other relevant factors detailed within this report.

10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The proposal provided within this report, if accepted by the Cabinet Member, would not require a Data Protection Impact Assessment as it would effectively mean the cessation of the contracts when they end on 31 March 2025. However, if an alternative decision is made to reprocure the contracts then a DPIA will be completed subject to any re-procurement exercise.

11. OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There may be additional rental costs associated for the continued use of the Seashells and Millmead centres for KCC’s commissioned Public Health services.
- 11.2 The level of need that families who access Seashells and Millmead have is below the threshold for statutory intervention. As such we would not expect the families currently accessing these services to be facing issues that qualify for statutory intervention. We are also clear that the service provision at the alternative locations is sufficient to meet the need locally. As a result, we do not expect to see a rise in referrals to our Front Door service as a result of this decision.

12. RISKS

- 12.1 The table below sets out the key risks in relation to the proposal.

Risk	Mitigation
Capacity at existing Family Hubs to accommodate new service users.	Service managers confirm that capacity exists within the in-house Family Hub network.

<p>Ability of service users that currently attend Millmead to access provision at alternative locations in Margate.</p>	<p>We consider the alternative locations to be within reasonable reach. Community Development officers will help families who require additional support navigate the transition. Potential to offer reimbursed public transport vouchers to service users (subject to further consideration by officers).</p>
<p>Suitability of Sheppey Gateway to accommodate Family Hub services.</p>	<p>Capital investment to make amendments to the Gateway in order to increase safeguarding provision and better accommodate the Family Hub services. This work will be funded by DfE Family Hub grant money and potentially by drawing on S106 contributions and does not represent a pressure on capital budgets.</p>
<p>Capital funding required to make necessary alterations at Sheppey Gateway.</p>	<p>Feasibility study and close budget monitoring to control the cost of works and keep within the available grant funding.</p>
<p>Other services will be impacted as the loss of these contracts may force the centres to close entirely.</p>	<p>Officers' assessment is that the two centres are likely sustainable without the commissioned Family Hub contracts, although we acknowledge there is some risk to other services available at each centre outside of the Family Hub contract. As set out above, each centre operates nursery facilities and in the case of Millmead, Public Health colleagues are investigating the potential for a Healthy Living Centre at the site.</p> <p>At Seashells these services include: Food Bank/Community Pantry Health Visiting (including Developmental Checks and Healthy Child clinics) Introducing Solids Midwifery Clinics Nursery One You Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Drop In Playground Project Seashells Strolls Sensory Hub</p>

	<p>At Millmead these services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book Library Cost of Living Advice Citizens Advice Service Food Bank/Community Pantry Garden Club Health Visiting (including Developmental Checks and Healthy Child clinics) Midwifery Clinics Nursery One You Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Drop In <p>Advice from colleagues within CYPE is that the market for nursery provision is buoyant and that if the centres were to cease operation as a result of a decision not to renew the Family Hub contracts, then other providers would likely fill the gap given market conditions.</p> <p>The NHS and Public Health services are already available at the alternative locations in Margate and can be accommodated within Sheppey Gateway (with enabling building work) should this be necessary.</p> <p>Other non-health related services could be provided at the alternative locations should the need arise.</p>
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13. GOVERNANCE

- 13.1 Following any decision by the Cabinet Member, any required activity will be delegated to the Director for Operational Integrated Children’s Services.
- 13.2 Provisional notice of the contract end has been served to each of the providers, however this has been issued subject to the final decision by the Cabinet Member.

13.3 Should members recommend renewal of the contracts, then the re-procurement will take in excess of six months. The existing contracts will be extended, for the period of re-procurement only.

14. CONCLUSIONS

14.1 Officers have explored a proposal which would mean we do not renew the Commissioned Family Hub contracts when the current contracts come to their end on 31 March 2025.

14.2 A public consultation sought the views of service users and partners on the proposal and the suggested alternative arrangements to provide Family Hub services.

14.3 Members are asked to consider the balance of the assessed impact of this proposal, the response to the consultation and the overarching priority policy position.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services is asked to:

APPROVE the proposal to not re-commission the Family Hub services that are currently provided at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE any activity requiring capital spend as set out in the report to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, and Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services.

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services to explore the option for Kent County Council to deliver outreach Family Hub services from Seashells and Millmead centres when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to finalising, entering into, concluding or managing any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

15. Background Documents

- Appendix 1: Service Offer Comparison
- Appendix 2: Consultation Report
- Appendix 3: Draft Responses to Consultation Feedback
- Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

16. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Mrs Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

DECISION NUMBER:

24/00093

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Commissioned Family Hub Contracts

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services I agree to:

APPROVE the proposal to not re-commission the Family Hub services that are currently provided at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE any activity requiring capital spend as set out in the report to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, and Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services to explore the option for Kent County Council to deliver outreach Family Hub services from Seashells and Millmead centres when the current contracts reach the end of their term on 31 March 2025.

DELEGATE authority to the Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to finalising, entering into, concluding or managing any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

The financial challenges facing all local authorities is critical. KCC needs to deliver £108.8m (2024-25 published Medium Term Financial Plan) of transformation and efficiency savings over the next two years. Our work to meet these challenges has already meant changes to services across the county.

In October 2023 the KCC Cabinet adopted '[Securing Kent's Future](#)' which set out the scale of the financial challenge and the approach to tackling it. The financial situation means that we have needed to adopt a Recovery Plan which sets out how we plan to meet the challenge. A key part of the Recovery Plan is to make 'further savings and generate income through the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)'. The MTFP sets out precisely what savings are needed to balance the budget and where those savings could be made.

Background

In November 2023 KCC Cabinet took a [decision](#) to implement the Family Hub model across the County. At the time, that included transformation and efficiency plans for 56 Family Hub locations across Kent not including the two Independent centres, Millmead and Seashells (in line with the Kent Communities Programme [decision](#), also from November 2023).

In November 2023 KCC Cabinet took decision 23/00092 to implement the Family Hub model across the County. At the time, that included transformation and efficiency plans for 56 Family Hub locations across Kent not including the two Independent centres, Millmead and Seashells (in line with the Kent Communities Programme decision 23/00101, also from November 2023).

Due to the fact that Millmead and Seashells Family Hub services are both externally commissioned, they were not included within the scope of the Kent Communities Programme analysis.

There has been a sequence of decisions that deliver savings against what was the previous Open Access (now Family Hub) budget as set out in the MTFP (more detail in the next section). Firstly decisions were made that considered the Family Hub model itself and the buildings used to deliver the services. These decisions have been implemented, delivering savings through model redesign, staff restructure and building rationalisation. With the commissioned contracts ending in March 2025, the next consideration in sequence, as we seek to make the remaining saving outlined in the MTFP, is whether to renew these contracts or whether the service provision can be delivered differently, thus saving money for the Council.

The contracts for the two Independent Children's Centres were tendered and awarded in 2020 for a period of 12 months. The services were subject to Directly Awarded contracts from April 2021 to March 2022 under Covid-19 guidance. A Key Decision (21/00086) was taken on 10 November 2021 to directly award contracts to the existing providers for a further year until 31 March 2023. A further Key Decision (22/00108) facilitated an additional 12 month extension, meaning the contracts ended on 31 March 2024.

To minimise duplication of provision and to ensure that future specifications complimented the Family Hub model being developed, the procurement of new commissioned Children Centres was delayed. In 2024, a further Direct Award was made to the two centres as Family Hubs. The terms and conditions of this contract were continued from the previous contract and require a six month notice period. Therefore the current contracts end 31 March 2025. In July 2024 indicative notice of the end of the contracts was given to each provider, subject to the outcome of the consultation and any resultant Key Decision.

Further extension of these contracts is not possible, other than to cover the period of procurement for new contracts, subject to the decision.

It is therefore proposed that KCC will not re-procure these two contracts when they come to their end on 31 March 2025. The Family Hub service will be delivered from within existing Family Hubs in Margate as an alternative to the Millmead Centre. In relation to the Seashells Centre a Family Hub service will be offered from the Sheerness Gateway. Some minor investment may be required at the Gateway to enhance safeguarding provisions given the increased number of children and babies

that may be in attendance.

Financial Implications:

In accordance with the Cabinet decision to support the recommendations in the paper Securing Kent's Future on 5 October 2023, the approach set out makes sure that, in line with the Recovery 'further savings and income for the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)' are realised.

The decision to not reprocur the two contracts will save £426k annually.

Minor capital investment will be required at the Gateway site to facilitate safeguarding and the appropriate use of the space for the Family Hub activities. It is planned that this is funded from the Capital grant award from the DfE to facilitate the Family Hub transformation.

Provider	Area	Contract End Date	Contract value per Annum
Millmead	Margate	31/03/2025	£222,127.44
Seashells	Sheerness	31/03/2025	£204,302.16
Totals			£426,429.60

Legal Implications:

KCC has a statutory duty under Section 5 of the Childcare Act 2006 to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of children's centres (now known as Family Hubs) to meet local need. Local need is the need of parents, prospective parents and young children in Kent. As a service, we are confident that, if adopted, the proposal we have developed would allow KCC to continue to provide sufficient children's centres (now known as Family Hubs) to meet need in the districts affected.

KCC is also required to have regard to the Sure Start children's centre statutory guidance (April 2013). Chapter 2 of the guidance ('Sufficient children's centres') explains that children's centres and their services should be: accessible to all children and families in the area; within reasonable reach of all families, taking into account distance and the availability of transport; targeted at those with a risk of poor outcomes, based on an analysis of local need; meet needs in terms of opening times and availability of services. Furthermore, local authorities should not close an existing children's centre as part of a reorganisation of provision unless they can demonstrate outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected and will not compromise the duty to have sufficient children's centres to meet need. The guidance explains that the starting point should be a presumption against the closure of children's centre.

The same Act requires that Local Authorities in England to undertake consultation when considering changes that would result in a Children's Centre (or Family Hub) ceasing to be a Children's Centre (or Family Hub). The consultation process undertaken in relation to this proposal is detail in Section 4.

KCC has a statutory duty under s. 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 to improve the well-being of young children in Kent and reduce inequalities between young children in their area in relation to certain specific matters¹. Under s. 17 of the Children Act 1989, KCC also has a general duty to safeguard and promote the needs of children in need in Kent and promote the upbringing of children in need by their families, by providing an appropriate level and range of services.

KCC also has a statutory duty under s. 11 of the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements for

ensuring that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and that any services provided by another person pursuant to arrangements with KCC are provided having regard to that need.

The need analysis above demonstrates that the children and families that access both Seashells and Millmead are considered to be children in need (within the definition of the Children's Act 1989).

As set out above, the modelling which informed the Kent Communities Programme means that Family Hub locations are designed to serve the communities with highest need. The analysis also demonstrates that the hours of provision delivered under the contracts can be provided at the alternative sites proposed. The Family Hub model itself seeks to improve outcomes for our children and families. With that in mind, outcomes for these children and families are considered not to be adversely affected.

In regards to meeting the requirements linked to safeguarding for the remainder of the contracts, KCC contract management procedures will be used all the way to the end of the contract period to ensure any statutory safeguarding provisions are upheld.

Staff currently employed by the two providers to deliver activity under the Family Hub contract will be eligible for TUPE transfer within the existing Family Hub service. At the time of writing, KCC HR colleagues have begun discussion with one of the two centres and the other has not fully engaged with the conversation around potential TUPE transfer. Currently the service is holding vacancies across the Family Hub workforce and it is anticipated that staff eligible for TUPE will fill these vacancies should they choose to transfer to KCC.

Equalities implications

An initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken in advance of the consultation. The EqIA has been updated following the review of consultation feedback (as outlined in section 5) paying particular attention to any equalities concerns raised within consultation response. The full Equalities Impact Assessment has been included at Appendix 4.

Broadly, the equalities impact of the proposal falls on those residents with the following protected characteristics: gender, age and disability. The full EqIA sets the analysis out in detail for these, and other, protected characteristics. The most significant impact identified is the requirement under the proposals for residents to travel (particularly related to Millmead) further to access services and the impact of attending unfamiliar locations.

Of the six options (all set out in section 6) the highest impact will be felt on Options 1 (the proposal) and Option 5. Options 2, 3, 4 and 6 will have lesser impact on these communities, but that must be balanced by the fact that these options require further actions that will have impacts elsewhere across the county.

Mitigations have been suggested in response to the feedback, including potentially providing subsidised bus fares for residents accessing a new Family Hub when previously they have used Millmead. Our network of Community Development officer will also be utilised to help residents that require additional support to navigate the transition.

The impacts, when considered alongside the mitigation measures detailed within the EqIA and considered within the overarching policy priority context in which the Council operates, are considered to be justified.

Data Protection implications

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be completed prior to any re-procurement exercise

subject to the decision taken

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

On 21 November 2024 the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered the proposed decision.

The committee passed a motion proposing that:

That the decision be delayed until the new government funding is confirmed and that there be a temporary extension of contract, subject to it being legally viable;

That a valuation of the buildings be undertaken;

And, that an update be brought to the next meeting.

New Government Funding

In relation to the first part of the motion, officers have repeatedly requested confirmation from the Department for Education civil servants as to the amount of grant money that KCC will be awarded to cover the period April 2025 to March 2026. Officers have also requested confirmation as to what, if any additional delivery requirements and constraints will accompany any additional grant award.

At the time of writing, there has been no further detail provided by the DfE on the specific amount of year 4 grant award money, or the delivery requirements.

Legal Viability of Extension

Legal advice has been provided by external legal advisors that confirms it is not possible for KCC to unilaterally extend the current contracts as there is no power to do so.

Building Valuations

The committee also requested valuations be made on the KCC Family Hub sites in Margate:

1. Margate Family Hub
2. Northdown Road Family Hub
3. Cliftonville Family Hub

Cliftonville Family Hub is not a building owned by KCC and is occupied under a lease that costs circa £54k per year.

Desktop valuations have been provided by officers within Infrastructure for both Margate Family Hub and Northdown Road Family Hub.

Margate Family Hub: £250k - £450k (depending on use class)

Northdown Road Family Hub: £200k - £400k (depending on use class)

Conclusion

The information provided in response to the Cabinet Committee motion will inform any future decision by the Cabinet Member.

An update on these queries will be provided to the next CYPE Cabinet Committee meeting.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The six options considered are as follows: Page 37

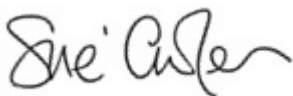
- Option 1: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts and provide services within existing KCC locations (the decision proposal).
- Option 2: Reprocure significantly reduced contracts.
- Option 3: Reprocure comparable contracts and close other Family Hub locations in other areas (as this would save building costs).
- Option 4: Reprocure comparable contracts and reduce services in alternative Family Hub locations (as this would save service costs).
- Option 5: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts but find alternative standalone locations for alternative provision.
- Option 6: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts, but instead hire space for KCC Family Hub staff to deliver the services from within the two settings.

The options are set out in detail within the full decision report. The table below summarises the reason each option has been discounted.

Option	Discounted because
1	Not discounted – this is the decision proposal.
2	Would not achieve the full MTFP saving agreed by Council. Would require cuts elsewhere to areas that have already been cut. Would retain inconsistency in our delivery model.
3	Would not achieve the full MTFP saving agreed by Council within the financial year. Would require cuts elsewhere to areas that have already been cut. Would retain inconsistency in our delivery model.
4	Would not achieve the full MTFP saving agreed by Council within the financial year. Would require cuts elsewhere to areas that have already been cut. Would retain inconsistency in our delivery model.
5	Would not achieve the full MTFP saving as agreed by Council.
6	Would not achieve the full MTFP saving as agreed by Council.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None.



17/1/2025

.....
signed

.....
date

Appendix 1: Service Offer Comparison

Part 1: Millmead

The Family Hub services on offer at Millmead under this commissioned contract which would no longer run at Millmead include: *booking or referral required.	The sessions available at Cliftonville Family Hub include (as at June 2024 and subject to further timetable amendments): *booking or referral required.	The sessions available at Margate Family Hub include (as at June 2024 and subject to further timetable amendments): * booking or referral required.	The sessions that will be available from Northdown Road Family Hub by the end of March 2025 include: *booking or referral required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Breastfeeding Clinic • Breast Pump Hire • Cygnet* • Healthy Baby Group • Introducing Solids Workshop • Little Explorers • Little Talkers* • Stay and Play • Triple P Parenting Course* • You and Your Baby* • 1-2-1 Family Work* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Beyond the Page* • Breast Pump Scheme* • Cygnet Course* • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Community Pantry (from September 2024) • Healthy Child Clinic • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • My First Year and Me • One You • Sensory Room • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • 1-2-1 Family Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Breastfeeding Support Group • Breast Pump Scheme* • Citizens Advice Clinic • Cost of Living Support Group • Cygnet Course* • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Groups and Services for 8-19yr olds (25yrs with SEND) • Health Visiting and Wellbeing Reviews • Infant Feeding Clinic • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Explorers • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • Midwifery Services • My First Year and Me • One You • Sensory Room • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • 1-2-1 Family Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Breastfeeding Support Group • Breast Pump Scheme* • Citizens Advice Clinic • Community Café Space • Cost of Living Support Group • Cygnet Course* • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Groups and Services for 8-19yr olds (25yrs with SEND) • Healthy Child Clinic • Introducing Solids Workshops • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Explorers • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • Midwifery Services • Outdoor and Indoor Sports Hall/Courts • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • Young Lives Foundation • 1-2-1 Family Work

Part 2: Seashells

<p>The services on offer at Seashells under this commissioned contract which would no longer run at Seashells include: * booking or referral required.</p>	<p>Subject to confirmation of a specific timetable, we would expect to offer the following services at the Sheppey Gateway site for residents: * booking or referral required.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Baby and Toddler Sing and Sign • Breastfeeding Clinic • Breast Pump Hire • Little Talkers* • Sensory Hub • Solihull Antenatal Class • Solihull Parenting* • Stay and Play • Triple P Parenting Course* • 1-2-1 Family Work* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Birth Registrations (Library and Registration Service) • Citizens Advice Clinic • Infant Feeding Support • Little Talkers* • Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Drop In • Playground Creative Play (Libraries and Registration Service) • Stay and Play • Triple P Parenting Course* • 1-2-1 Family Work



KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SEASHELLS AND MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB CONSULTATION WRITTEN REPORT

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH



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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Millmead and Seashells are the only two externally commissioned Family Hubs in Kent. The rest of the Family Hub provision is run directly by KCC. KCC are proposing not to get new contracts in place and instead provide services that people can access from other locations, ensuring a consistent approach in all areas of Kent.

This consultation is about the future of two commissioned Family Hubs contracts in Kent: Millmead Family Hub in Margate and Seashells Family Hub in Sheerness. Currently, Kent County Council (KCC) pay for external providers to run Family Hub services in these locations and their contracts are due to end on 31 March 2025. This consultation focuses only on the commissioned Family Hub services and does not include any of the other activities such as the nursery provision, food banks or multiple other services at each site.

KCC must decide whether to put new contracts for delivery of Family Hub services in place (re-procure the contracts) or not. If KCC do get new contracts in place, they would be required to run a new process which would be open to the current providers and any new providers to bid for the contracts.

Consultation process

On 30 July 2024, a public consultation was launched, lasting just under 8 weeks until 22 September 2024. The consultation invited responses from all those interested in the proposals, including those that use / have used family hub services at either of the two commissioned family hubs.

Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on the KCC engagement website (www.kent.gov.uk/familyhubsconsultation). Hard copies of the consultation material, including the questionnaire, were made available at Millmead and Seashells Family Hubs were also available on request. Consultation material and the webpage included details of how people could contact KCC to ask a question, request hard copies or an alternative format. A Word version of the questionnaire was provided for people who did not wish to complete the online version. An easy read version of the consultation document and questionnaire was also available.

To raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, the following was undertaken:

- Email sent to stakeholders.
- Email sent to those registered with Let's talk Kent (KCC's engagement platform) who had expressed an interest in being kept informed of consultations about 'children and families' and 'schools and education' in Thanet and Swale (2,152 people).
- Additional email sent to Let's talk Kent participants about the drop-in sessions.
- Media release issued: [Have your say on the future of commissioned Family Hub services - News & Features - Kent County Council](#).
- Promoted via social media on KCC's corporate channels (X, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, LinkedIn).
- Article in KCC's residents e-newsletter.

- Posters and promotional postcards available at Millmead Family Hub and other local hubs (Cliftonville Family Hub, Margate Family Hub, and Northdown Road Family Hub).
- Posters and promotional postcards available at Seashells Family Hub and Sheppey Gateway.
- Information added to relevant pages on kent.gov.uk.

There were also some face-to-face engagement events:

- Millmead Family Hub
- Margate Family Hub
- Seashells Family Hub
- Sheppey Gateway

A summary of interaction and supply of consultation material can be found below:

- 6,257 visits to the consultation webpage by 5,627 visitors during the consultation period.
- Organic posts via KCC’s corporate channels had a reach of 28,881 on Facebook and Instagram. There were 48,909 impressions on X (Twitter), LinkedIn, Nextdoor and Instagram. Reach refers to the number of people who saw a post at least once and impressions are the number of times the post is displayed on someone’s screen. The posts generated 725 clicks through to the consultation webpage. (Not all social media platforms report the same statistics).
- The number of document downloads from the website are show in the table below:

Document name	Downloads / views
Consultation document	632
Equality Impact Assessment	145
Residents questionnaire (Word version)	47
Millmead Consultation Document - Easy Read version	38
Seashells Consultation Document - Easy read version	29
Seashells Consultation Questionnaire - Easy read version	9
Millmead Consultation Questionnaire - Easy read version	5

Points to note

- Consultees were invited to comment on each aspect of the consultation and were given the choice of which questions they wanted to answer / provide comments. The number of consultees providing an answer is shown on each chart / table featured in this report.
- 672 consultees chose to answer questions regarding Seashells Family Hub in Sheerness, Swale, and 433 consultees chose to answer questions regarding Millmead Family Hub in Margate, Thanet. 99 consultees chose to answer questions about both Family Hubs.
- Consultees were given a number of opportunities to provide feedback in their own words throughout the questionnaire. This report includes examples of verbatims received (as written by those contributing) but all free text feedback is being reviewed and considered by KCC.
- This report includes feedback from residents and professionals / organisations and the consultation contained a separate questionnaire for each stakeholder group. Feedback for each stakeholder group has been reported separately.
- Participation in consultations is self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Response to this consultation does not wholly represent the individuals or stakeholders the consultation sought feedback from and is reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- Additional feedback received during the consultation in the form of emails, letters and verbal conversations at drop-in events has been summarised and is available within the appendices.
- KCC was responsible for the design, promotion, and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research was appointed to conduct an independent analysis of feedback.

Profile of **resident consultees** responding

1,016 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire.

The table below shows the profile of consultees responding to the consultation questionnaire only. The proportion who left this question blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable.

RESPONDING AS...	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
A Kent resident	887	87%
On behalf of a friend or relative	25	2%
A resident from somewhere else	3	0%
Other	18	2%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	83	8%

GENDER	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Male	134	13%
Female	653	64%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	229	23%

GENDER SAME AS BIRTH	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	760	75%
No	1	0%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	255	25%

AGE	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
0-15	21	2
16-24	57	6
25-34	275	27
35-49	256	25
50-59	74	7
60-64	40	4

AGE	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
65-74	45	4
75-84	19	2
85 & over	2	0.2%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	227	22%

PRESENCE OF CHILDREN	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
I/we have children	641	63%
- 0-1 year old	225	22%
- 2-5 years old	319	31%
- 6-10 years olds	187	18%
- 11-19 years old	177	17%
I am / we are expecting a child	62	6%
I/we do not have children	79	8%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	234	23%

RELIGION / BELIEF	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	228	22%
- Christian	185	18%
- Hindu	5	0.5%
- Jewish	3	0.3%
- Muslim	11	1%
- Sikh	2	0.2%
- Other	15	1%
No	502	49%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	286	28%

DISABILITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	186	18%
- Physical impairment	71	7%
- Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)	17	2%
- Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy	82	8%
- Mental health condition	87	9%
- Learning disability	39	4%
- Other	10	1%
No	553	54%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	277	27%

CARER	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	178	18%
No	569	56%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	269	26%

ETHNICITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
White English	665	65%
White Scottish	5	0.5%
White Welsh	4	0.4%
White Northern Irish	3	0.3%
White Irish	6	1%
White Irish Traveller	3	0.3%
Asian or Asian British Indian	5	0.5%
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	5	0.5%
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	3	0.3%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	10	1%
Mixed White & Black African	6	1%
Mixed White & Asian	5	0.5%

ETHNICITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Black or Black British Caribbean	1	0.1%
Black or Black British African	9	1%
Other	41	4%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	245	24%

SEXUALITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Heterosexual/Straight	686	68%
Bi/Bisexual	29	3%
Gay man	3	0.3%
Gay woman/Lesbian	10	1%
Other	3	0.3%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	285	28%

Profile of **professionals / organisation** consultees responding

95 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire.

The table below shows the profile of consultees responding to the consultation questionnaire only. The proportion who left this question blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable.

RESPONDING AS...	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Community-based midwifery staff	3	3%
Health Visiting staff	12	13%
Staff from another health-related organisation	10	11%
As any other professional working in an organisation that supports children, young people or families	22	23%
On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity	3	3%
As a Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor	3	3%
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	17	18%
Other (current / previous volunteers / employees at Family Hubs, work in public sector)	11	12%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	14	15%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESIDENT FEEDBACK – SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

- 672 consultees chose to answer questions about the Seashells Family Hub. Just under two thirds of consultees answering (63%) indicated they use services at Seashells Family Hub. 20% do not currently services at the Hub but have done so in the past; 16% of consultees answering have not used services at the Hub.
- When asked to detail the impact that accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on themselves and / or their family, the common themes reported are as follows:
 - A desire for Seashells Family Hub not to close as it an integral part of the local community / used by many families and closing it would have a huge impact (32%)
 - The Sheppey Gateway will not be able to offer the same level of service / its not able to house all of the services offered at the Seashells Family Hub (25%)
 - The Seashells Family Hub is invaluable for the children who use it in terms of their development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising opportunities (23%)
 - The staff at Seashells are welcoming and supportive / concerned they will lose their jobs (21%)
 - Seashells offers key support to parents / babies / new mums and is invaluable for parents raising their children (17%)
- When asked to comment on the Equality Analysis put forward for the Seashells Family Hub proposal and if there was anything that should be considered relating to equality and diversity, the common themes reported are as follows:
 - Reiterated points / reasons consultees believe the Seashells Family Hub should not close (35%) and the Sheppey Gateway should not be used (23%)
 - Perceptions that Seashells Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality and is an environment where everyone is welcome (20%)
 - Seashells Family Hub serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived residents / areas and that the proposed move discriminates against these demographic groups / people living in Sheerness (14%).

RESIDENT FEEDBACK – MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

- 433 consultees chose to answer questions about the Millmead Family Hub. Just under three quarters of consultees answering (73%) indicated they use services at Millmead Family Hub. 18% do not currently services at the Hub but have done so in the past; 10% of consultees answering have not used services at the Hub.
- When asked to detail the impact that accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on themselves and / or their family, the common themes reported are as follows:

- Millmead Family Hub is local / accessible / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access and that many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to afford the bus / alternatives are uphill / inaccessible to mums on foot (53%)
- Millmead Family Hub must not be closed / it's a much-needed resource / relied upon by many families / offering lots to local families and believing closure would be devastating (37%)
- Perceptions lots of deprived children attend Millmead Family Hub / it is invaluable for their development / enjoyment / wellbeing / socialising skills (22%)
- Staff at Millmead Family Hub are welcoming / supportive / they trust them and they / their children have developed close relationships with them (16%)
- When asked to comment on the Equality Analysis put forward for the Millmead Family Hub proposal and if there was anything that should be considered relating to equality and diversity, the common themes reported are as follows:
 - Reiterated points / reasons consultees believe the Millmead Family Hub should not close (36%)
 - Requests for considerations for those who cannot use or pay for transport (20%)

PROFESSIONAL / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK – SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

- When asked to detail the impact that accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on children, young people and families, the most common themes expressed are consistent with feedback received from the residents component of the consultation. They include:
 - Concern about leaving a well-established place / environment that is well used and trusted by local community, which is particularly important in an area of deprivation
 - Concern services and available parking offered at Sheppey Gateway would be more limited than at Seashells Family Hub / valued services would reduce
 - Concern about appropriateness of Sheppey Gateway in terms of safety / comfort for its users, location and sharing the building with other organisations / services
- When asked to describe the impact they think accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on other services and organisations, the most common themes expressed include the following:
 - Concern for impact on Seashells Family Hub services / other services currently in Seashells Family Hub building resulting in further loss of services and inability for services to work together
 - Concern for impact on residents / service users needing to use other statutory services / health and care services / other services that are already stretched

- When asked to express any views on the equality analysis undertaken and whether there is anything else that should be considered, the most common themes expressed include the following:
 - Concern about the impact on travelling to Sheppey Gateway / physical access to Sheppey Gateway in terms of public transport / users with disabilities
 - Concern that proposals do not consider the relationship and trust that users have with the Seashells Family Hub / services offered / staff

PROFESSIONAL / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK – MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

- When asked to detail the impact that accessing services at a different Family Hub, like Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road, would have on children, young people and families, the most common themes expressed are consistent with feedback received from the residents component of the consultation. They include:
 - Concern about leaving a well-established place / environment that is well used and trusted by local community, which is particularly important in an area of deprivation
 - Concern current users / residents local to Millmead Family Hub would not travel to visit other centres / services due to lack of available income to travel / deprivation / having to use public transport to get there
 - Concern about impact on local area / already an area that has lost services / is in need of Millmead Family Hub / an area of significant deprivation
- When asked to describe the impact they think accessing services at a different Family Hub, like Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road, would have on other services and organisations, the most common themes expressed include the following:
 - Concern for impact on Millmead Family Hub services / other services currently in Millmead Family Hub building resulting in further loss of services and inability for services to work together
 - Concern for impact on using other statutory services / health and care services / other services already stretched
- When asked to express any views on the equality analysis undertaken and whether there is anything else that should be considered, the dominant theme expressed is concerns for access to alternative services / alternative hubs / family hubs / children’s centres¹ amongst vulnerable groups.

¹ Verbatim comments refer to Family Hubs and Children’s Centres. Children’s centres now operate within Family Hubs.

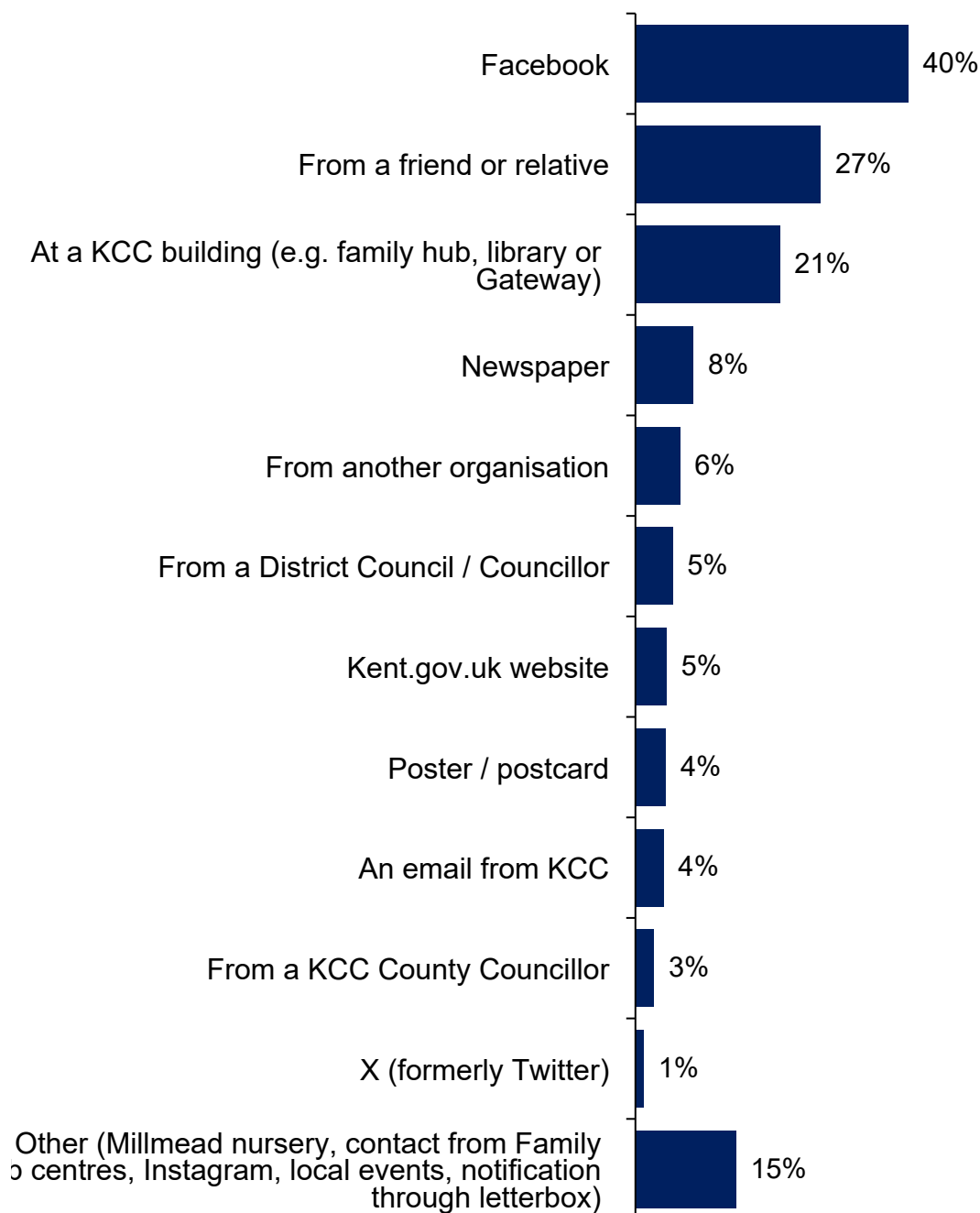
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

CONSULTATION AWARENESS

- The most common route to finding out about the consultation is via Facebook (40%), followed by a friend or relative (27%) and a KCC building (e.g. family hub, library or Gateway) (21%).

How did you find out about this consultation?

Base: all answering (926), consultees had the option to select more than one response.



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Facebook	367	40%
From a friend or relative	249	27%
At a KCC building (e.g. family hub, library or Gateway)	194	21%
Newspaper	78	8%
From another organisation	60	6%
From a District Council / Councillor	50	5%
Kent.gov.uk website	42	5%
Poster / postcard	41	4%
An email from KCC	38	4%
From a KCC County Councillor	25	3%
X (formerly Twitter)	11	1%
Other (Millmead nursery, contact from Family Hubs, Instagram, local events, notification through letterbox)	135	15%

There are significant differences by demographic subgroup and current users and non-users of the two Family Hubs:

- A higher proportion of female consultees found out through Facebook (44%) compared to male consultees (22%).
- A higher proportion of consultees aged 25-34 found out at a KCC building (e.g. family hub, library or Gateway) (26%) compared to consultees aged 35-49 (24%) and consultees aged 50 and over (15%).
- A higher proportion of consultees who use services at Seashells Family Hub or have used the Hub in the past found out via Facebook (51% / 49%) compared to non-users (20%).
- A higher proportion of consultees who use services at Millmead Family Hub found out at a KCC building ((e.g. family hub, library or Gateway) (34%) compared to consultees who have used the Hub in the past (14%) or non-users (10%).

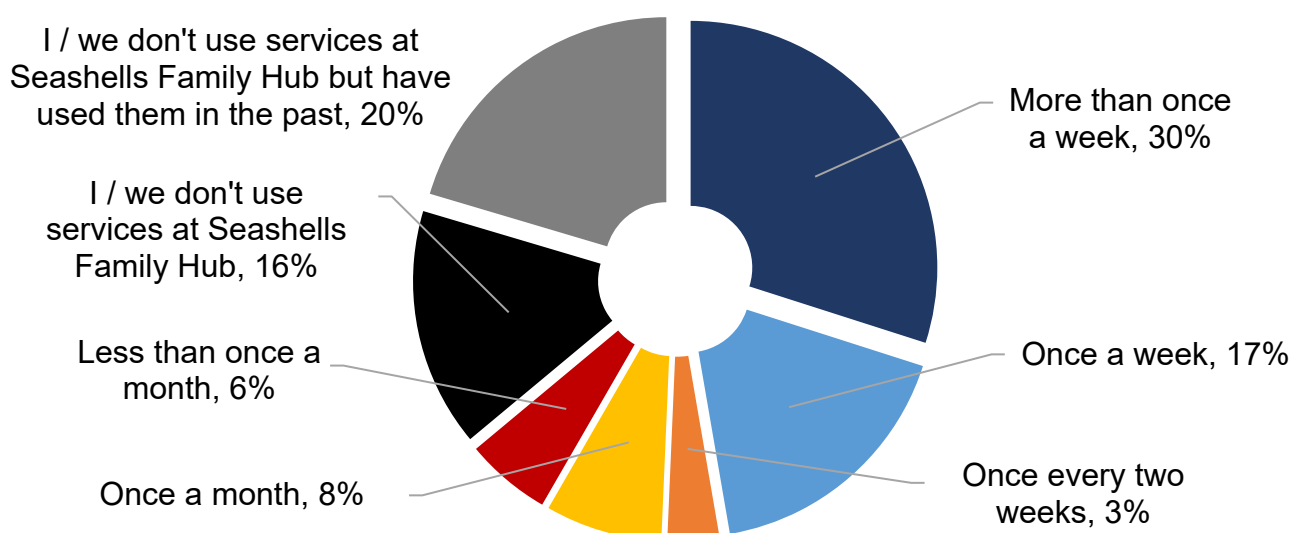
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

This section of the report summarises responses to the questions posed surrounding the Seashells Family Hub in Sheerness, Swale, as reported by consultees. 672 consultees chose to answer questions regarding this Hub.

FREQUENCY OF USING SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

- Just under two thirds of consultees answering (63%) indicated they use services at Seashells Family Hub. 47% use services there at least once a week (30% more than once a week, 17% once a week).
- A fifth of consultees answering (20%) do not currently services at Seashells Family Hub but have done so in the past. 16% of consultees answering have not used services at the Hub.



SUPPORTING DATA TABLE	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net: Use Seashells currently (any frequency)		64%
More than once a week	176	30%
Once a week	102	17%
Once every two weeks	20	3%
Once a month	45	8%
Less than once a month	33	6%
I / we don't use services at Seashells Family Hub	92	16%
I / we don't use services at Seashells Family Hub but have used them in the past	120	20%

There are significant differences in the proportion who currently use services at the Seashells Family Hub by age group: a higher proportion of consultees aged 25-34 and 35-49 currently use services at the Hub (74% and 68%) compared to consultees aged 50 & over (47%).

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF ACCESSING FAMILY HUB SERVICES AT THE SHEPPEY GATEWAY ON FAMILY

- Consultees were asked to detail the impact they think accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on themselves and / or their family, in their own words.
- For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below.
- 75% of consultees who chose to answer questions about the Seashells Family Hub provided a comment at this question.
- The most common theme noted is a desire for Seashells Family Hub not to close as it an integral part of the local community / used by many families and closing it would have a huge impact (32%).
- Just under a quarter of consultees answering (23%) commented that the Seashells Family Hub is invaluable for the children who use it in terms of their development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising opportunities. 21% commented the staff at Seashells are welcoming and supportive / concerned they will lose their jobs. 17% commented that Seashells offers key support to parents / babies / new mums and is invaluable for parents raising their children.
- A quarter of consultees answering (25%) noted they believe the Gateway will not be able to offer the same level of service / it's not able to house all of the services offered at Seashells. 15% of consultees believe the move to Gateway will encounter safeguarding issues for the children who use it as it is on the high street / accessible to passers-by / non-users.
- There are also some concerns over access to services at the Sheppey Gateway with 13% of consultees commenting that the Seashells Family Hub is local / accessible on foot for all (including those with pushchairs / users with a disability) and many wouldn't be able to access other centres nor afford to use transport. 13% also commented that Seashells has a free accessible car park and the Shepway Gateway does not.

Please tell us what impact you think accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on you / or your family? Base: all answering (505)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seashells must not close: vital to / an integral part of the community, used by many families; closing it would have a significant impact	160	32%
Gateway will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at Seashells	126	25%
Seashells is invaluable for children; their development, enjoyment, wellbeing, socialising, soft play, nursery	114	23%
Seashells / the staff are welcoming, supportive, make you feel part of a family / concern staff will lose their jobs	105	21%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seashells offers key support to (new) mums / parents and babies, postpartum support and invaluable for parents raising their children	85	17%
Gateway will have safeguarding issues; for children, being on the high street / possibility of passers-by / non-users / strangers walking in	76	15%
Seashells is local, accessible on foot, with pushchairs / for the disabled; many wouldn't be able to access other centres, nor afford to use transport	68	13%
Seashells has a free accessible car park, Gateway does not	65	13%
Seashells provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation	64	13%
Seashells is a warm, safe, secure, trusted, reliable space	60	12%
Gateway is not family friendly	60	12%
If Seashells closed, we / many would be unable to attend anywhere else	51	10%
Seashells is good for mental health support, has mental health session	50	10%
Gateway is used by too many other services: banking, library, clubs	48	10%
Seashells is a lifeline to many	42	8%
Seashells has outdoor space / we have no garden / children can play outside	40	8%
Seashells is an information resource / they provide advice and signposting	38	8%
This is an area of recognised high deprivation; closing it would impact the most vulnerable / in need, pushing them further into deprivation	35	7%
Seashells is safe for children, has door release button / children can play safely / away from the busy high street	33	7%
We / many have been using Seashells for years, many regular users	26	5%
Seashells has health clinics, baby weigh clinics, health visitors	25	5%
Gateway is only open 4 days a week	23	5%
Seashells has the food bank which many rely on	22	4%
There are lots of (free) clubs, activities, sessions, groups, invaluable to many who couldn't afford otherwise	22	4%
There is no private space at the Gateway	18	4%
Taking it away will cause more social problems, including an increase in referrals to family support services	17	3%
Seashells has sensory rooms, used by many	14	3%

Some example verbatims underpinning consultees desire for Seashells Family Hub not to close as it an integral part of the local community / used by many families and closing it would have a huge impact can be found below:

“Seashells was put where it is because that is where the greatest community need is for a group of people that struggle to access services. This may not be due just to distance but because of trust of "outsiders" and "officials". Will the building remain viable after losing £200k funding? If we lose the building other services currently in there will have nowhere to go so even more services will be lost to those communities. Seashells Centre, it is open 8:30am to 5:30pm Monday-Friday. You rightly point out that the other centres do not support their communities as robustly. There is currently a sensory hub at Seashells, and you cannot provide straight away at the Gateway. Given the financial position of KCC how will you ever be able to duplicate something already available elsewhere, particularly if this proposal is driven in part to reduce duplication? Vulnerable children need easy access to sensory support and stimulation to reduce the impact difficulties can have on them, it is a vital resource that will negatively impact outcomes for children if not appropriately supported by KCC.”

“All my children and myself have accessed the amazing support groups they have on offer at seashells including the baby and toddler sing and sign, breastfeeding clinic and Solihull parenting group. Seashells is an amazing asset of a building to children and families, the building is always immaculate with bright colours and welcoming as well as the staff being one large family who welcome you with open arms at the front door. Many people including myself do not like going into the high street to access certain services and feel that seashells is a safe place and a place where you can attend to seek support. Unless you yourself who are completing this consultation have had to access food banks which is embarrassing and humiliating as a parent or adult, then moving this to the middle of a high street will make it even more humiliating for us to go to. Seashells knows most people by their first name and that personal touch will not be available in the gateway due to it being one large free for all building. Sheerness does not have much at all that impacts on people’s lives, and you are taking away the only thing that they do have.”

“The impact of losing this facility would be great. Not only to myself and family but also to other local families. I currently access the stay and plays, mental health drop in’s as well as my daughter attending the nurse based in the building. The children’s centre offers a huge overview of options and facilities for all families in the local area, no matter their background. In particular, sheerness is a deprived area with not a lot of places offering the facilities, social gatherings and supports that Seashells does. The loss of the building will mean the loss of maternity and health visitor facilities (not everyone can get to the local hospital), the support to new mothers by offering health visitor and breastfeeding drop ins and the ever as important stay and play and children’s groups. Each child should be given the opportunity to access these facilities for the help of socialising and Learning. The centre also offers the use of food banks and money help which many access. No other building in the local area would be big enough to hold all these facilities. To lose this for the local community would be a huge issue and would show that once again, no one cares for the area or the people of Sheerness. We should be able to access the same full services as other towns.”

Some example verbatims underpinning consultees comments regarding the Hub being invaluable for children / the staff being welcoming and supportive and offering support to parents / babies / new mums / parents raising their children can be found below:

“It would isolate single/new parents. These facilities enable parents to meet up with other people in the same situation. It enables a support network to be formed. They help with mental health issues surrounding being a parent and help ease the burden. They also help babies and children through all early year’s developmental stages. They allow these children to socialise with others of similar ages and to meet other children where perhaps no other children are in their family network. These centres provide a wealth of opportunities for children that may not be fortunate enough to have much at home. They allow interaction, messy play which isn’t always suitable for home, outside play for children in homes without gardens and much needed support and advice for parents. Without these centres the quality of life for countless children and babies would be greatly affected. These centres provide an affordable opportunity for parents and children to have quality, fun time together in a safe environment.”

“During my first pregnancy I was struggling to get out the house as I didn’t have friends that had a young baby as well. My mental health was struggling. The health visitor suggested Seashells to me. I struggle with social anxiety, but my husband encouraged me to go and came with me. Whilst there I met a group of 4 women all with babies of a similar age. 2 year later we are all still friends and our babies; now toddlers are still friends. We still use seashells as much as we are able to. I have since had twins, and again Seashells has saved my mental health postpartum. I honestly don’t know what I would have done without them and the groups.”

“Seashells are an absolute lifeline. Without the breastfeeding support, the access to Introduction to Solids workshop or the Stay and Play sessions I do not know where I’d be - they’ve kept me sane and helped me to be a better parent. I also think that moving it to the Gateway where there is no parking or the Toddler Sing and Sign would be a real shame - both of these things are incredible for accessibility. Especially the Sing and Sign class, I cannot afford to pay for these classes which is the case elsewhere, but signing has provided me and my child invaluable communication to better our relationship and his development and autonomy.”

Some example verbatims underpinning consultees comments regarding the Gateway not being able to offer the same level of service / house all of the services offered at Seashells and the move to Gateway encountering safeguarding issues for the children who use it can be found below:

“There is no privacy and too many other services being offered to a variety of people. Families need consistent and tailored support, which Seashells offer. It would be criminal to take this away from our community.”

“Sheppey Gateway has less space than the Seashells building. It is suggested that Services will be reduced. Partner services may continue at Seashells but will be disassociated from the hub making them more inconvenient to access . Sheppey Gateway opens directly onto the High street and there is no parking, meaning parents having to find money for parking fees. It is clear through looking at education on Sheppey that much more needs to be done to support children and families to raise expectations, to improve preschool educational

opportunities, to instil a love of learning and ambition at a young age. KCC should be looking to expand its offering to young families and so reduce the spending on dealing with older children and young adults in the future.”

“The Sheppey Gateway is not suitable for as there are many drug users, drunk people, homeless people using it. It's not the right environment for children. I'm sure the library figures have been less as since being part of the gateway and we don't go there anymore because of the safeguarding risk. The gateway also has no parking, it won't be manned when we need it and discriminates against people living in Sheerness as this will be an outreach venue only. It is completely impractical for a family hub service and all KCC is doing is being driven by a very small cut to their budget rather than putting people first.”

“Seashells is wonderful setting that everyone feels safe in. There's big grounds for outdoor play and it's separate to the gate way - the gate way is already squashed? The children's library there is inadequate, there's a lot of dodgy people around the high street - it is not welcoming and we'd also worry about our children running out onto a main road.”

Response filtered by current users of services at Seashells Family Hub only

- When filtering responses to the key themes by consultees who indicated they currently use services at the Seashells Family Hub, response is broadly consistent but a higher proportion comment on the Seashells Family Hub being invaluable for the children who use it in terms of their development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising opportunities (29%).

Please tell us what impact you think accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on you / or your family? Base: all answering (343)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seashells must not close: vital to / an integral part of the community, used by many families; closing it would have a huge impact	93	27%
Gateway will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at Seashells	83	24%
Seashells is invaluable for children; their development, enjoyment, well-being, socialising, soft play, nursery	99	29%
Seashells / the staff are welcoming, supportive, make you feel part of a family (includes staff will lose their jobs)	77	22%
Seashells supports (new) mums / parents and babies, postpartum support, invaluable for parents raising their children	54	16%
Gateway will have safeguarding issues; for children, being on the high street, strangers walking in	53	15%
Seashells is local, accessible on foot, with pushchairs / for the disabled; many wouldn't be able to access other centres, nor afford to use transport	46	13%
Seashells has a free accessible car park, Gateway does not	51	15%
Seashells provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation	52	15%
Seashells is a warm, safe, secure, trusted, reliable space	38	11%
Gateway is not family friendly	40	12%
If Seashells closed, we / many would be unable to attend anywhere else	41	12%
Seashells is good for mental health support, has mental health session	40	12%
Gateway is used by too many other services: banking, library, clubs	30	9%
Seashells is a lifeline to many	30	9%
Seashells has outdoor space / we have no garden / children can play outside	33	10%
Seashells is an information resource / they provide advice and signposting	24	7%
This is an area of recognised high deprivation; closing it would impact the most vulnerable / in need, pushing them further into deprivation	14	4%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seashells is safe for children, has door release button / children can play safely / away from the busy high street	25	7%
We / many have been using Seashells for years, many regular users	21	6%
Seashells has health clinics, baby weigh clinics, health visitors	14	4%
Gateway is only open 4 days a week	13	4%
Seashells has the food bank which many rely on	13	4%
There are lots of (free) clubs, activities, sessions, groups, invaluable to many who couldn't afford otherwise	20	6%
There is no private space at the Gateway	7	2%
Taking it away will cause more social problems, including increase in referrals to family support services	8	2%
Seashells has sensory rooms / used by many	8	2%

Differences in response by resident demographic

- Further to likely usage patterns, there are some significant differences in impact perceptions by resident demographic:
 - A higher proportion of female consultees comment on the staff at Seashells being welcoming and supportive / concerned they will lose their jobs (24%) and that Seashells offers key support to parents / babies / new mums and is invaluable for parents raising their children (20%).
 - A higher proportion of consultees aged 35-49 note a desire for Seashells Family Hub not to close as it an integral part of the local community / used by many families and closing it would have a huge impact (39%).
 - A higher proportion of consultees with children 0-1 years old comment the Seashells Family Hub is invaluable for the children who use it in terms of their development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising opportunities (34%), Seashells offers key support to parents / babies / new mums and is invaluable for parents raising their children (25%) and Seashells provides a social aspect / place for making friends / prevents social isolation (20%).
 - A higher proportion of consultees with children 2-5 years old comment the Seashells Family Hub is invaluable for the children who use it in terms of their development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising opportunities (32%) and the staff at Seashells being welcoming and supportive / concerned they will lose their jobs (26%).

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FOR SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB PROPOSAL

- Consultees were asked to comment on the Equality Analysis put forward for the Seashells Family Hub proposal and if there was anything that should be considered relating to equality and diversity in their own words.
- For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below.
- 45% of consultees who chose to answer questions about the Seashells Family Hub provided a comment at this question.
- A significant proportion of comments noted at this question reiterate points / reasons consultees believe the Seashells Family Hub should not close (35% of consultees commenting) and the Sheppey Gateway should not be used (23% of consultees commenting).
- 20% of consultees made reference to perceptions of Seashells Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality and is an environment where everyone is welcome. 14% commented that the Seashells Family Hub serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived residents / areas and that the proposed move discriminates against these demographic groups / people living in Sheerness.
- Comments include requests for consideration of specific demographic groups:
 - Children (without the safety / support / familiarity of Seashells) – 14%
 - Users with a disability / mums with pushchairs (access concerns) – 10%
 - Users with Special Educational Needs (SEN) needs / the neurodivergent – 8%
- 9% of consultees answering request consideration of accessibility re parking, lack of parking at Gateway.
- 9% of consultees answering requested consideration of safeguarding concerns / perceptions of the Gateway not being safe for children due to building location / use by others.

Please tell us your views on our equality analysis and/or if you think there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity for the Seashells Family Hub proposal?

Base: all answering (301)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Comments / reasons for not closing Seashells / Seashells should not be closed / it's vital	105	35%
Comments / reasons for not using Gateway / Gateway should not be used	70	23%
Seashells is inclusive / equality is all they know / everyone is welcome	60	20%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seashells serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived residents / areas / plans discriminate against those people / people living in Sheerness	43	14%
Consider the children / the impact on their lives and their futures without the safety, support, familiarity, importance of Seashells	41	14%
Consider accessibility for users with a disability / mums with pushchairs	31	10%
Consider accessibility re parking, lack of parking at Gateway	26	9%
Consider safeguarding - Gateway is not safe for children – location / building nor from other users	26	9%
Discriminates against those who are losing access to services, e.g. especially mums and babies	25	8%
Consider those with SEN needs, the neurodivergent, discriminates against those if no longer able to access services	24	8%
You should consider the desperate situations of those who use Seashells / the impact on them if Seashells was to close	24	8%
Consider those who cannot use or pay for transport (public or private)	17	6%
Consider those with mental health issues	16	5%
Not representative of the area, needs to be a local / community assessment	16	5%
Looks fine, covered everything	12	4%
No need to label or categorise people, take everyone for who they are	6	2%
Discriminates against those not on benefits, who also rely on these services	3	1%
Don't understand the question	12	4%

Some example verbatims underpinning perceptions of Seashells Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality / the proposed move discriminates against vulnerable and deprived residents / users can be found below:

“Seashells show equality in every service or group they do , showing anyone is welcome to come and join a group or seek help if they need too .”

“Seashells welcomes the whole community. They welcome everyone and make suitable adaptations where needed. People who use Seashells do not feel judged and are treated with kindness and respect. Sheppey Gateway, however, is not like this. When I have been there with my autistic child who sometimes makes sounds, they ask me to manage his behaviour or leave. The Gateway is not inclusive for someone with anxiety or autism how can you expect them to walk through a busy high street to access Seashells? How can people with physical disabilities access the centre? Where will they park? How is it safe?”

The doors to the Gateway are always open? Anyone can walk in. How will you address child safeguarding? How will you stop photos being taken? Children watched?."

"Seashells has always offered services to support equality and diversity. In particular, the staff are supportive of neurodivergent families and their specific needs."

Some example verbatims underpinning consideration for specific demographic groups (children, users with a disability / mums with pushchairs / users with SEN needs / the neurodivergent) can be found below:

"The Isle of Sheppey is greatly lacking in services such as Seashells. Without this centre, there is nothing for the catchment age group to do in a structured setting with peers until they reach nursery age. Thus, depriving these children of much needed development skills such as interacting with peers and fine motor skills. These hubs allow new parents to the area to get to know what is available and to meet people. Without these centres those less fortunate could easily become forgotten about. They provide a wealth of information and support for parents of all ages and backgrounds."

"Those of working and lower class who are struggling to access employment or manage the cost of living should have centres available to them where support on raising children can be found; it is a huge concern that the poorest and most vulnerable in our society have the hardest time in seeking support and being able to achieve a good quality of life."

"I had surgery from pregnancy. I need to park close to centre. Gateway has no parking. I have little money to pay for parking. My children like to play outside. Where can they do this at the Gateway? My child will have limited learning. Limited play with other children. My child are not the same as other children."

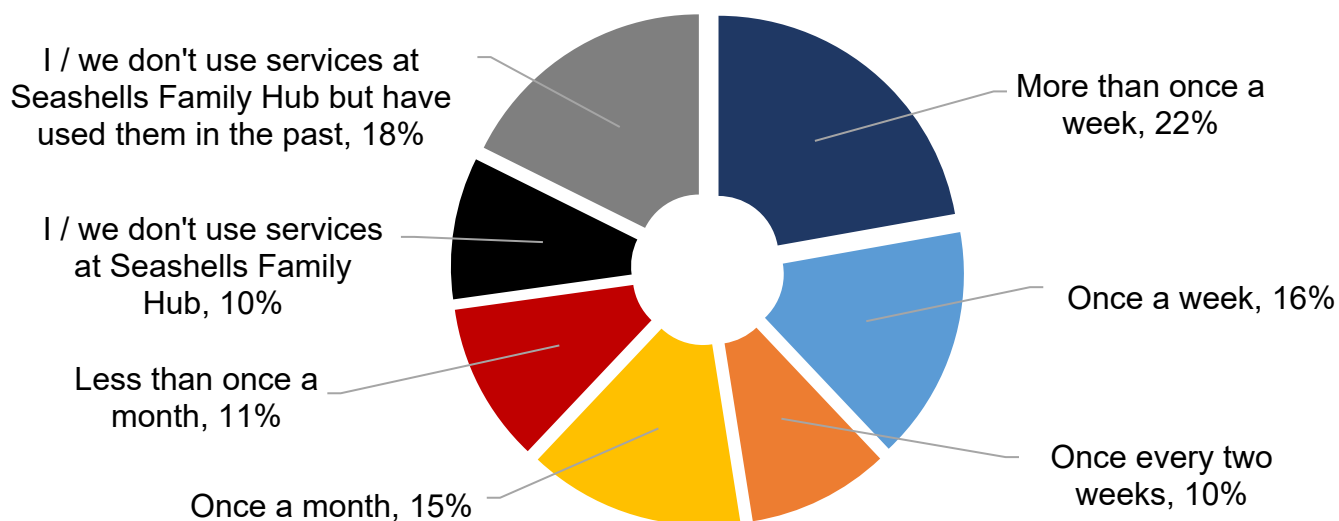
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

This section of the report summarises response to the questions posed surrounding the Millmead Family Hub in the consultation, as reported by consultees. 433 consultees chose to answer questions regarding this Hub.

FREQUENCY OF USING MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

- Just under three quarters of consultees answering (73%) indicated they use services at Millmead Family Hub. 38% use services there at least once a week (22% more than once a week, 16% once a week).
- Just under one in five consultees answering (18%) do not currently services at Millmead Family Hub but have done so in the past. 10% of consultees answering have not used services at the Hub.



SUPPORTING DATA TABLE	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net: Use Millmead currently (any frequency)	305	73%
More than once a week	93	22%
Once a week	66	16%
Once every two weeks	40	10%
Once a month	61	15%
Less than once a month	45	11%
I / we don't use services at Millmead Family Hub	40	10%
I / we don't use services at Millmead Family Hub but have used them in the past	74	18%

There are significant differences in the proportion who currently use services at the Millmead Family Hub by age group: a higher proportion of consultees aged 25-34 and 35-49 currently use services at the Hub (90% and 69%) compared to consultees aged 50 & over (48%).

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF ACCESSING FAMILY HUB SERVICES AT A DIFFERENT FAMILY HUB, E.G. MARGATE (SIX BELLS), CLIFTONVILLE OR NORTHDOWN ROAD

- Consultees were asked to detail the impact they think accessing Family Hub services at a different Family Hub (e.g. Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road) would have on themselves and / or their family, in their own words.
- For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below.
- 87% of consultees who chose to answer questions about the Millmead Family Hub provided a comment at this question.
- The most common theme noted is that the Millmead Family Hub is local / accessible / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access and that many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to afford the bus / alternatives are uphill / inaccessible to mums on foot (53%).
- 37% of consultees commenting believe that Millmead Family Hub must not be closed / it's a much-needed resource / relied upon by many families / offering lots to local families and believing closure would be devastating.
- Just under a quarter of consultees (22%) commented they believe lots of deprived children attend Millmead Family Hub / it is invaluable for their development / enjoyment / wellbeing / socialising skills. In addition, 10% commented that the current Hub is in an area recognised for deprivation levels and that removing Millmead could push these families further into deprivation.
- 16% of consultees commented that the staff at Millmead Family Hub are welcoming / supportive / they trust them and they / their children have developed close relationships with them. 13% also commented that Millmead is a safe, warm, secure, comforting, familiar, welcoming environment.
- 12% also commented that Millmead Family Hub has a free accessible car park, and the alternatives do / may not.

Please tell us what impact you think accessing services at a different Family Hub, like Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road, would have on you and / or your family? Base: all answering (376)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Millmead is local / accessible / many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to even afford the bus fare / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access / others are uphill and inaccessible to mums on foot	201	53%
Millmead must not be closed: is much needed resource, relied upon by many families, offering lots to local often deprived families, closing it would be devastating, save money elsewhere	140	37%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Lots of deprived children attend Millmead: is invaluable for their development, enjoyment, well-being, socialising, soft play, nursery, Sure Start	84	22%
The staff at Millmead are welcoming / supportive / we trust them and we and the children have developed close relationships with them	62	16%
Millmead is a safe / warm / secure / comforting / familiar / welcoming environment	50	13%
Millmead has a free accessible car park / others do / may not	46	12%
Recognised area of deprivation / removing Millmead could push these families further into deprivation	37	10%
There are lots of clinics attended / health visitor / baby weigh / healthy child clinic	36	10%
Millmead is relied upon by new mums, provides postpartum support, breastfeeding support, used by lots of mums / parents with babies	35	9%
Many families would no longer be able to attend, use services if Millmead closed	34	9%
Others will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at others	29	8%
Clubs, events, activities are free, couldn't afford to pay for such like, we attend lots of activities we wouldn't be able to otherwise	28	7%
Change not good for those with anxiety - places, people, surroundings, means they would not be able to attend elsewhere	24	6%
Other hubs would be stretched	21	6%
Millmead has baby sensory rooms / classes	18	5%
Millmead provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation	17	5%
We / lots use Millmead regularly, have done for years	15	4%
Millmead is accessible for the disabled, all on one level	15	4%
Others are not family friendly , not set up for families and children	14	4%
Millmead is a lifeline for many families	13	3%
Millmead provides lots of information and advice, signposting	10	3%

Some example verbatims underpinning comments regarding the Millmead Family Hub being local / accessible on foot (including for mums with pushchairs / mums postpartum) and that many wouldn't be able to go alternatives can be found below:

"I believe that any cut to the service would be detrimental. The fact that these other hubs are around 1.5 miles further away for these families will inevitably make it more difficult for

them to travel. As an area of high deprivation, they may not have access to their own vehicle or the funds for public transport. Therefore, making it more difficult to access the services available.”

“Millmead Children’s Centre serves a deprived local area where many parents don’t drive, accessing a family hub further from town will reduce the chance of a visit for many parents in the area and adversely affect the development and wellbeing of children in the area.”

“Accessing different family hub services would ruin the sense of community and trust that we have built up here at Millmead. We are confident and safe here and would not use an alternative hub due to lack of community and distance to travel.”

Some example verbatims underpinning comments about not wanting Millmead Family Hub to close / perceptions it’s a much-needed resource and staff at are welcoming / supportive can be found below:

“The closure of Millmead Family Hub would have a profound and negative impact on my family and the wider community. Millmead is located in the Dane Valley area of Margate, which is one of the most deprived wards in Kent. The centre serves as a critical resource for over 62 families who rely on its services for necessities such as midwifery, child development support, and social services. For my family, Millmead has been more than just a place for services—it has been our lifeline during some of our most challenging times. The loss of Millmead would mean that many vulnerable families would lose access to essential services, potentially leading to an increase in social isolation and a deterioration in child and family health outcomes. The staff at Millmead have built strong, trusting relationships with local families, providing personalized support that would be difficult to replicate at other hubs. Moving these services would not only disrupt these critical relationships but also potentially lead to a decrease in service usage, as the new locations are not as accessible or familiar to the community. The unique role that Millmead plays in the lives of local families cannot be overstated—its closure would be a significant blow to the community’s well-being.”

“I have built a good relationship with staff and feel welcome and safe, my child whom is 2 years recognises the building ,staff and lay out and feels comfortable, the services are so helpful for my son because he doesn’t talk yet so it’s helpful for him to have interaction with other children his own age in a safe and welcoming environment. I also enjoy socialising with other parents and talking to staff there.”

“Millmead is the best family hub in the area. It is closest to my house. And easy to reach on foot. As a single parent the support and help I’ve received from Millmead has been invaluable. And I would be gutted for myself and the wider community if it went. Frankly it is way better than the other centres, in the services it offers but also the building and facilities. Its spacious, clean and the staff are incredible.”

Some example verbatims underpinning comments regarding the impact on deprived children who use the Hub / the concern for further deprivation can be found below:

“I think that having a community space that is central to your neighbourhood can only benefit all that live there. Millmead is home to some of the poorest people in Thanet and as

such they continue to be affected by the long-term effects of poverty and its issues that are passed down generations. With the closure of Quarterdeck, there is an astounding lack of provision for youth on the Isle. This will only mean a rise in antisocial behaviour and crime on the estate. Those with limited mobility might struggle in accessing the services at other hubs should this centre shut down. Not to mention, the fostering of a community within Millmead will just disappear. Will these services still be as effective absorbing all these people from the Millmead Centre?"

"The Millmead Centre now stands as an important community hub that helps many poor and deprived households connect with services that can help them. If you remove the services from this hub, I strongly doubt any significant number would reengage with other outposts. Furthermore, you are proposing to move services 1.5 miles to Cliftonville which, if anything, is more deprived and needy. As a result, Cliftonville has something of a reputation as somewhere not to go. Even assuming that the Millmead residents do in part take advantage of the Cliftonville hubs, you run the risk of overburdening those hubs by forcing them to service two areas of notable poverty and need. In practice, I believe that what you will find is that the removal of a community lifeline from Millmead would only serve to reinstate the disenfranchisement the Millmead team has worked so hard to undo. I am fully confident that most families will see this as taking away services from them. I am equally confident that very few if any will engage with hubs that can be more than half an hour away depending on bus reliability and traffic conditions. I believe that these changes could save KCC a significant amount of money but at the cost of ceasing to serve a vulnerable and isolated community. There is a very real human cost component to this recommendation that is not reflected in the consultation report."

"Dane Valley itself is one of the most deprived areas in Kent, this centre is a lifeline for many families. To remove these services is an entirely false economy. From a capital perspective, the centre is only 20 years old and provides excellent facilities. In the longer term - the true cost of closure will almost certainly come back to haunt KCC via increased pressures on the NHS, Social Care and our schools. Early years support for families is vital to our economy and has proven positive impact on family functioning and emotional development of our young people. It has also been found that in areas supported by SureStart, there were significant reductions in the number of hospital admissions for children 0-15 years old. Withdrawing services to Millmead will not only be an act of cruelty - severing a lifeline for communities who need it most but will be an act of economic incompetence that must be fought at every step."

Response filtered by current users of services at Millmead Family Hub only

- When filtering response to the key themes by consultees who indicated they currently use services at the Millmead Family Hub, response is broadly consistent across all themes.

Please tell us what impact you think accessing services at a different Family Hub, like Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road, would have on you and / or your family? Base: all answering (278)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Millmead is local / accessible / many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to even afford the bus fare / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access / others are uphill and inaccessible to mums on foot	147	53%
Millmead must not be closed: is much needed resource, relied upon by many families, offering lots to local often deprived families, closing it would be devastating, save money elsewhere	93	33%
Lots of deprived children attend Millmead: is invaluable for their development, enjoyment, well-being, socialising, soft play, nursery, Sure Start	61	22%
The staff at Millmead are welcoming / supportive / we trust them and we and the children have developed close relationships with them	46	17%
Millmead is a safe / warm / secure / comforting / familiar / welcoming environment	40	14%
Millmead has a free accessible car park / others do / may not	38	14%
Recognised area of deprivation / removing Millmead could push these families further into deprivation	22	8%
There are lots of clinics attended / health visitor / baby weigh / healthy child clinic	30	11%
Millmead is relied upon by new mums, provides postpartum support, breastfeeding support, used by lots of mums / parents with babies	27	10%
Many families would no longer be able to attend, use services if Millmead closed	28	10%
Others will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at others	23	8%
Clubs, events, activities are free, couldn't afford to pay for such like, we attend lots of activities we wouldn't be able to otherwise	24	9%
Change not good for those with anxiety - places, people, surroundings, means they would not be able to attend elsewhere	21	8%
Other hubs would be stretched	19	7%
Millmead has baby sensory rooms / classes	18	6%
Millmead provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation	16	6%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
We / lots use Millmead regularly, have done for years	13	5%
Millmead is accessible for the disabled, all on one level	9	3%
Others are not family friendly , not set up for families and children	13	5%
Millmead is a lifeline for many families	9	6%
Millmead provides lots of information and advice, signposting	8	3%

Differences in response by resident demographic

- Further to likely usage patterns, there are some significant differences in impact perceptions by resident demographic:
 - A higher proportion of consultees aged 35-49 comment that the Millmead Family Hub is local / accessible / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access and that many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to afford the bus / alternatives are uphill / inaccessible to mums on foot (63%).
 - A higher proportion of consultees aged 50 and over comment that Millmead Family Hub must not be closed / it's a much-needed resource / relied upon by many families / offering lots to local families and believing closure would be devastating (49%).
 - A higher proportion of consultees with children 2-5 years old and 6-10 years old comment that the Millmead Family Hub is local / accessible / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access and that many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to afford the bus / alternatives are uphill / inaccessible to mums on foot (64% / 64%).

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FOR MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB PROPOSAL

- Consultees were asked to comment on the Equality Analysis put forward for the Millmead Family Hub proposal and if there was anything that should be considered relating to equality and diversity in their own words.
- For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below.
- 39% of consultees who chose to answer questions about the Millmead Family Hub provided a comment at this question.
- A significant proportion of comments noted at this question reiterate points / reasons consultees believe the Millmead Family Hub should not close (36% of consultees commenting).
- 16% of consultees made reference to perceptions of Millmead Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality and is an environment where everyone is welcome. 24% commented that the Millmead Family Hub serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived residents / areas and that the proposed move discriminates against these demographic groups / people living in Thanet.
- 20% of consultees answering request consideration of those who cannot use or pay for transport.
- Comments include requests for consideration of specific demographic groups:
 - Children (without the safety / support / familiarity of Millmead) – 17%
 - Users with a disability / mums with pushchairs (access concerns) – 16%

We have completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the proposal for the Millmead Family Hub. Please tell us your views on our equality analysis and/or if you think there is anything we should consider relating to relating to equality and diversity for this proposal? Base: all answering (167)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Comments / reasons for not closing Millmead / Millmead should not be closed / it's vital	60	36%
Millmead serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived / proposed move discriminates against those people / the people of Thanet	40	24%
Consider those who cannot use or pay for transport	34	20%
Consider the children / the impact on their lives and their futures without the safety, support, familiarity of Millmead	28	17%
Millmead is inclusive / equality is all they know, everyone is welcome	27	16%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Consider accessibility for disabled, mums with pushchairs - Millmead is very accessible	26	16%
You should consider the desperate situations of those who use Millmead, the impact on them if Millmead was to close	21	13%
Discriminates against those who are losing access to services, e.g. mums and babies	15	9%
Looks fine / covered everything	10	6%
Not representative of the area / needs to be a local / community assessment	9	5%
No need to label or categorise people, take everyone for who they are	6	4%
Consider those with SEN needs, the neurodivergent, discriminates against those if no longer able to access services	6	4%
Comments / reasons for not using others	5	3%
Consider accessibility re parking, lack of parking at others	3	2%
Consider those with mental health issues	2	1%
Consider safeguarding - others are not safe for children – location / building nor from other users	2	1%

Some example verbatims underpinning perceptions of Millmead Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality / the proposed move discriminates against vulnerable and deprived residents / users can be found below:

“The centre serves a range of families and individuals in one of the most deprived areas of Margate, they have an amazing approach when it comes to inclusion and accessibility.”

“Millmead Hub covers a deprived area and the poorest and most vulnerable people will be really affected by losing these services.”

“The Millmead Family Hub serves a specific community and is well-attended by low-income parents. Closing this will create further inequality as those parents may struggle to cope with the added travel demands. Also putting pressure on the other hubs will lead to parents + children being excluded from activities / opportunities.”

Some example verbatims underpinning perceptions of Millmead Family Hub being inclusive / focused on equality / the proposed move discriminates against vulnerable and deprived residents / users can be found below:

“Please consider the access for those who cannot walk long distances and for those with communities that would mean getting to another service would be an impossible mission.”

“Some people may struggle to get to other centres. Millmead is a very deprived area and lots of people rely on it especially for the food bank and social aspects.”

“Very poor and does not understand the problems of residents using this facility. It may be fine for people in West Kent to get in their cars to access these services but would not work for the majority of families in need in Millmead.”

RESIDENT FEEDBACK

ANY OTHER PROPOSAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

- Consultees were asked to make any other comments or suggestions for the proposals put forward in their own words.
- For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below.
- 65% of consultees taking part in the consultation provided a comment at this question.
- The most common theme noted at this question reiterates points / reasons consultees believe the current Hubs are a much-needed resource as they are / relied upon by many / offering a lot to local families and that closing them would have a significant impact (70% of consultees commenting).
- Deprivation is also top of mind with 24% of consultees commenting that lots of deprived children attend the current Hubs and that they are invaluable in their development. 14% of consultees answering comment on the plans being made in areas of deprivation / removing the Hubs could push families further into deprivation.
- 14% of consultees answering comment on the Hubs being accessible and many not being able to go elsewhere / to alternatives due to personal circumstances (financial, practical and personal reasons).

Please tell us if you have any other comments or suggestions about the proposals in this consultation. Base: all answering (657)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
The Hub(s) is/are a much-needed resource(s) / relied upon by many families / offering lots to local often deprived families / makes no sense to close it/them / save money elsewhere / closure would be devastating / already had others closed	458	70%
Lots of deprived children attend the Hub(s) / invaluable for their development / enjoyment / wellbeing / socialising	159	24%
The staff at the Hub(s) are welcoming, supportive / we trust them and we and the children have developed close relationships with them	106	16%
The Hub(s) is/are local / accessible / many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to afford bus fare / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access / others are uphill and inaccessible to mums on foot	93	14%
Comments on plans made in areas of deprivation / removing the Hub(s) could push these families further into deprivation / make them even more vulnerable	89	14%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Others will not be able to offer the same level of service / it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at others, no privacy, would be stretched	83	13%
The Hub(s) is/are relied upon by new mums / provides postpartum support / breastfeeding support / used by lots of mums / parents with babies	74	11%
The Hub(s) provide(s) a social aspect / making friends / prevent social isolation	68	10%
The Hub(s) is/are a safe / warm / secure / comforting / welcoming / familiar environment	65	10%
Many families would no longer be able to attend / use services	61	9%
The Hub(s) is/are a lifeline for many families	57	9%
Clubs, events, activities are free, couldn't afford to pay for such like	51	8%
The services the Hub(s) provide(s) is/are good for my mental health / has mental health drop in sessions	47	7%
Lots of clinics attended / health visitor / baby weigh / healthy child clinic	43	7%
Alternatives to Seashells are not family friendly / not set up for families and children / other users / unsuitable hours / wrong location / unwelcoming / no pushchair parking	42	6%
The Hub(s) provide(s) lots of information and advice, signposting	32	5%
There would be an increase in family services referrals, disengagement, social problems (Surestart was invaluable in helping to prevent this), cost more down the line	31	5%

Some example verbatims underpinning comments regarding the Hub(s) being much-needed resources / relied upon by many families can be found below:

“Millmead family hub has helped me beyond belief. The outreach has gotten me through mental health crisis’. They improved my sons social and emotional wellbeing. I have gained more confidence in the services they have provided. Their food bank has kept me fed at times when I have had no food. They are detrimental to the community.”

“Millmead is a highly deprived area, most living in borderline or absolute poverty. Young families and especially teenage mothers need this service to survive! Those without a vehicle need the centre for midwife visits, help and support. The nursery...the food pantry...food bank and baby clubs are vital to such a deprived area of Margate. Closing this centre will result in major issues in the local community, mainly child poverty.”

“Keep Seashells open! There is a need for Seashells and what is offered at Sheppey Gateway is only a fraction of what Seashells offer. Sheppey Gateway have no facilities for SEN children or anything to offer families during the six-week holiday like Seashells offer,

After School Clubs will be lost for working parents and it will be harder to get any appointments to see the health visitor, finances, etc. There is too much to lose if Seashells is closed as a family hub just to save some money. It's clear Sheppey Gateway is a bad decision."

"Seashells has been a trusted and integral part of the local community for the past 20 years, offering services in a safe and supportive environment for families. It provides a warm, welcoming atmosphere where families are greeted with a friendly reception and their needs are promptly addressed by knowledgeable, well-trained staff. Over time, Seashells has built a strong reputation and deep trust within the community, with word-of-mouth playing a vital role in bringing new families to its services. Ending the Seashells funding will hugely impact the good work that can be done for the very vulnerable local community that it serves. By proposing to stop the funding and move just a handful to the Sheppey Gateway will result in an inferior service and in the longer term increasing the demand for other services down the line."

Some example verbatims underpinning comments regarding the impact on deprived children who use the Hub(s) / the concern for further deprivation can be found below:

"Families need these centres to socialise their babies and toddlers. For a lot of mums these classes will be their only opportunity. It's very important for a deprived community as also a chance for parents to see and learn how to care for their babies from others."

"Seashells is the hub of an already deprived community. It provides a place for many parents/families to come to daily. Staff are friendly, knowledgeable and welcoming."

"Closing Millmead will be a disaster for everyone. The little centres won't be able to cope with the sheer amount of people who use Millmead. Millmead is a deprived area and there for the hub is a massive help to lots of family's taking it away will leave the youth without a place to go and the babies and parents will have to travel to get the baby's weighed and seen so likelihood is they won't get seen as not many people can afford to drive."

Some example verbatims underpinning comments regarding accessing the Hubs / not being able to access on foot can be found below:

"Being a parent and Carer who has always made use of sure start Millmead, I feel the centre would be a HUGE loss to the residents, who would be unlikely to travel to the other venues. Depriving children & families of vital support that's been available for over 20 years."

"Sheerness and the Isle of Sheppey is predominantly a poor and deprived area. Removing essential family and children services hub from our area will have such a negative effect on so many young families that aren't able to travel to access advice and support."

"Seashells is used by people from all over the Island. It is accessible from all areas either by car, train, bus, or walking. Its opening hours and the facilities suit most people. Sheppey Gateway will not be able to offer this."

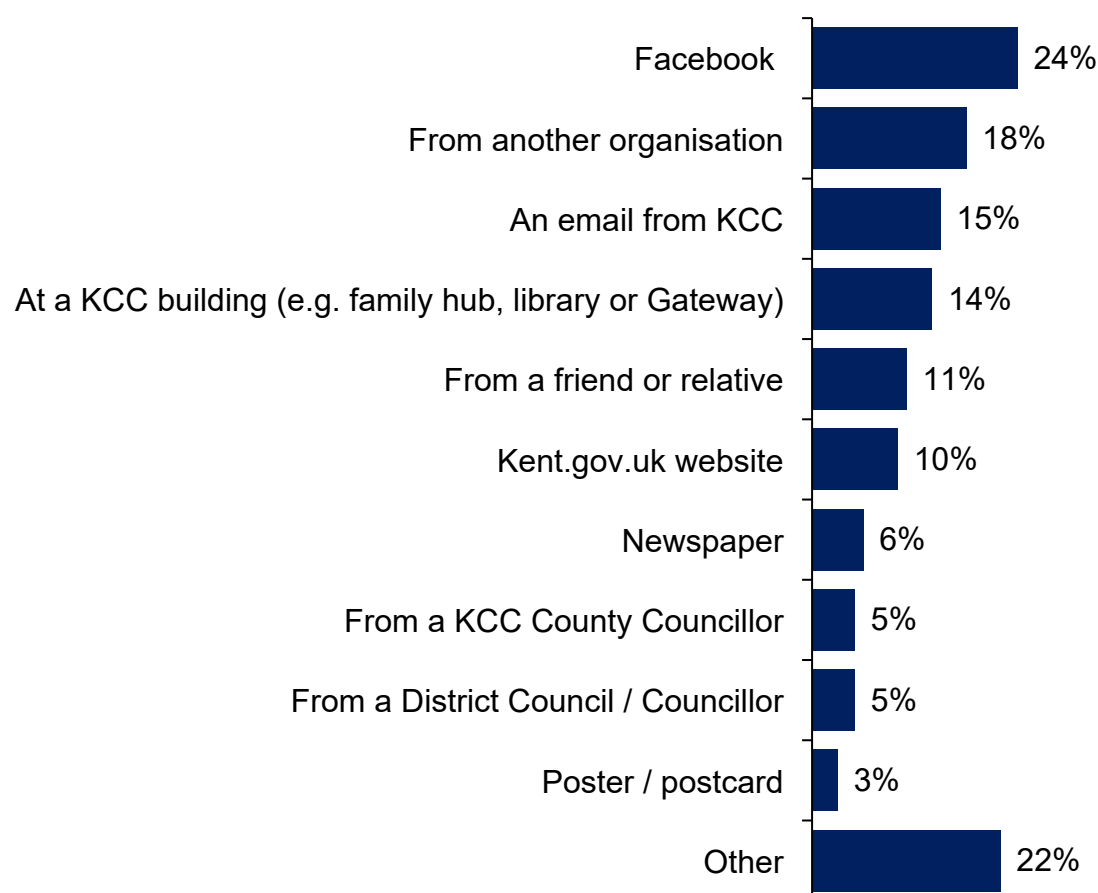
PROFESSIONALS / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK

CONSULTATION AWARENESS

- The most common routes to finding out about the consultation are via Facebook (24%), from another organisation (18%) and an email from KCC (15%).
- 14% found out at a KCC building (e.g. family hub, library or Gateway).

How did you find out about this consultation?

Base: all answering (95), consultees had the option to select more than one response.



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Facebook	23	24%
From another organisation	17	18%
An email from KCC	14	15%
At a KCC building (e.g. family hub, library or Gateway)	13	14%
From a friend or relative	10	11%
Kent.gov.uk website	9	10%

SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Newspaper	6	6%
From a KCC County Councillor	5	5%
From a District Council / Councillor	5	5%
Poster / postcard	3	3%
Other	21	22%

This section of the report summarises response to the questions posed surrounding the Seashells Family Hub in Sheerness, Swale, as reported by consultees. 67 consultees chose to answer questions regarding this Hub.

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF ACCESSING FAMILY HUB SERVICES AT THE SHEPPEY GATEWAY ON CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Consultees were asked to indicate what impact they think accessing Family Hub services at the Sheppey Gateway would have on children, young people and families. All 67 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concern about leaving a well-established place / environment that is well used and trusted by local community, which is particularly important in an area of deprivation:

“I am very concerned that asking families to leave a known and trusted centre is a retrograde step for an organisation that wants to build positive relationships with their communities. Families in this area are often extremely difficult to engage, taking this provision away will negatively impact this.”

“Engaging families in Swale is difficult enough. For a lot of families, it has taken professionals years to encourage engagement; building trust, familiarity etc. They are hard to reach families. The position of Seashells is informal and out of the way. There's an element of discretion and all these little things gives professionals a chance to build the trust and increase engagement.”

“Seashells is a very well valued, trusted service on Sheppey. Sheppey Gateway does not appear to have the same trust. The Isle of Sheppey is quite unique in Kent, the Islanders are in an area of high deprivation, lifespan is less than on mainland Kent. Seashells is a trusted provision, giving a good start to young people and their families. Not all listed services at Seashells are on the list for Sheppey Gateway. Residents will not be able to easily travel off the Island to access these services - cost, lack of public transport eg buses, congestion on the roads.”

“Though the Sheppey Gateway is a five-minute walk from Seashells, the move of the services only fuels the historic distrust that the most vulnerable communities have of statutory services. Seashells has been providing services for families and have built up a significant reputation and trusted relationships for families and people who have high and complex needs. Removing the services from this location demonstrates a failure of the system once more to provide consistency for this community, and the risk of adverse effects across Health and Care should be carefully considered and suitable mitigations in place.”

Concern services and available parking offered at Sheppey Gateway would be more limited than at Seashells Family Hub / valued services would reduce:

“After reading how the services will compare to what is available to young families now and what will be available. I feel that there will be a massive gap to support our young babies and their parents. Sheerness is in one of the most deprived areas and we need to have support and services in place to help these young babies' and their carers to help break this cycle. Stopping services such as Singing and signing will massively impact the already very low speech, language and communication skills of toddlers when starting nursery/preschool. Taking away support with Antenatal care, Breastfeeding and support with parenting will also have a huge impact on how our families begin their role as parents. These services need to stay be it at Seashells or moved to the Gateway.”

“The Sheppey Gateway is fine as it is but will never have the time or facilities that Seashells offers to local residents . There is so much more to Seashells than just a few groups and so many people use this amazing place each and every day.”

“The reduced hours, and number of services would be detrimental to all users. If a service disappears it will be very difficult to get users back. Those with special needs require an in iron meant that is familiar and consistent. This area and its residents constantly feel like they are second best and loosing services they will feel let down and under-valued.”

“This would have an impact on the numbers of families that attend groups and activities because the gateway is not as accessible as Seashells. Families will have to pay for parking because there is limited parking down the high street and for a limited time. The environment within the gateway is different and you have a different variety of customers, whereas in Seashells the environment is set for children and families and has a welcoming atmosphere.”

Concern about appropriateness of Sheppey Gateway in terms of safety / comfort for its users, location and sharing the building with other organisations / services:

“Seashells is a purpose-built building to provide a huge variety of services that are needed for the local community in a very bright and friendly welcoming environment, the gateway is a cold dark building that is mainly a vast open space inside and it opens directly onto the high street. I do not feel it's a safe environment for children or vulnerable adults it's also a few doors away from a pub that's open very early in the morning.”

“Car Parks around the Sheppey Gateway cost £1.40 per hour. We are in a deprived area and under a cost of living crisis, families will not be able to afford to pay to park in order to access the Gateway. There are no child/family parking spaces in the car parks around the Sheppey Gateway. Child safety concerns there is no perimeter fencing/gates, the Gateway opens directly onto Sheerness High Street. Mixing of groups within the Gateway, is not consider as a safe environment for children and families. The Gateway is a library and offices, Seashells is a Family Hub. Services should remain under 'one roof'.”

“The Sheppey Gateway is a multi-agency building, it can get very busy and users are often angry or confrontational. Also, it isn't always clear from the entrance lobby where services are situated and whether they are staffed. It could be intimidating and off-putting to families, particularly new parents. There doesn't appear to be any clarity as to how the breast pump loan scheme will be operated from the Gateway, there may be issues regarding storage and accessibility due to restricted opening hours.”

“The Sheppey Gateway was developed as a building to enable people to access public and voluntary services which has proved to be an asset for the community. However, this building is not a purpose build children’s centre and therefore the suitability of this is limited for children, young people and families to access. The Sheppey Gateway will continue to function as is currently, and there is a risk that if vulnerable families do not feel that the space is fit for purpose and does not provide a safe and confidential space for children, young people and families that people may disengage with the services. The opening times of the Sheppey Gateway are also restricted in comparison to Seashells, which may cause an inequality in access for families who need to use the facilities and services in the times that the Sheppey Gateway is not open.”

PERCEIVED IMPACT FOR PROPOSAL FOR SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB ON OTHER SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS

Consultees were asked to indicate what impact they think the proposal would have on other services and organisations. 65 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concern for impact on Seashells Family Hub services / other services currently in Seashells Family Hub building resulting in further loss of services and inability for services to work together:

“I think this has a huge potential to be damaging to other services as this is a huge amount of funding you are proposing to remove from children's services which may force the building to close or push up costs for other users making it no longer a viable option for service provision which will see other services leave effectively ending the provision. There has been so much lost through the family hubs transition already. Ironically this site was used as a pilot for the family hubs model and the successes in this site was rationale for the roll out across Kent. This would surely signal a significant risk to the model adopted by Kent and undermine public trust further.”

“Seashells work under the ethos of the previous SureStart programmes, which means they are a true hub of partnerships from health, public health, voluntary and third sector organisations, removal of the funding puts the centre at risk and therefore the ability of these services to work in partnership from the hubs. Seashells also run a nursery, there is a risk this may not be able to continue if the centre has to close due to lack of funding, in an area where the majority of the parents are eligible for the FF2 Early Years funding and with nursery places across Kent diminishing this would be a great loss.”

“Other organisations use the hub to support users of the hub, and this would not probably be possible at the Gateway to provide space alongside the family hub which would be a barrier to users of the hub accessing other services for support.”

“The proposals do not take into account the added value provided by additional services offered at Seashells. This breadth and depth of services, coupled with the staff’s deep knowledge of the local families from a variety of angles, ensures a more holistic approach to meeting community needs. Removing Seashells from the equation threatens to fragment the community-based work and reduce the effectiveness of local service delivery. There is also

the risk to the sustainability of Seashells itself, which may put other local services at risk. Although not directly affected by the proposed changes the daily midwifery and health visiting services co-located at Seashells are well established and have been integral to the services provided for local families. The trust and understanding that has been established through regular contact ensure good relationships and information sharing between professionals, which is crucial in improving outcomes. These changes will fragment services, reduce family engagement in service and undermine their effectiveness.”

“With the community midwifery venue access difficult in the area the removal of the ability to use Seashells will impact on clinic capacity, access to families who cannot drive and confidence in our service.”

“Splitting the current services across two locations could have an impact on both. There is likely to be some loss in users. A single location has the benefit of being able to provide information and support that goes beyond what they already offer. While two locations could provide users with the same information, it's not likely to be as effective. For example, antenatal classes will be at Gateway, but midwifery at Seashells. These go hand in hand, why split it up? A sensory hub is being proposed at Gateway, but one will remain at Seashells.”

“The proposal assumes that some services will remain, this is a huge assumption and shows lack of awareness of what is currently being funded by KCC. Following the removal of the core funding Seashells would need to explore other sources of income to replace the loss and would potentially need to charge for the room hire which is currently provided free of charge for social services, family time meetings, health visiting clinics, development reviews and appointments. This could result in a huge unplanned cost to KCC that again would mitigate any savings made by ending the contract. Less service users in the building may mean this is a less desirable location for other service who use the seashells service to meet their service requirements.”

Concern for impact on residents / service users needing to use other statutory services / health and care services / other services that are already stretched:

“If Seashells loses its services this will have a detrimental impact on families and children and is likely to result in more families using statutory services which are already stretched. This will result in families being isolated as many see seashells as a lifeline. In reducing services at Seashells this will reduce good outcomes for children. The area is one of the most deprived in Kent and Seashells offers free services for families to use. There is a well-used food bank and Community Pantry with a family finance worker to help families. I think this will result in more poverty for children and poor outcomes, short and long term.”

“The proposed changes could see an increase in provisions provided by other partners in health and care. With the times of the Sheppey Gateway being restricted compared to the current provision, if children, young people and families are in need there is potential that they will resort to other statutory provision and therefore increase the demand for these services.”

“If the cuts are made, more children will be taken into care, there will be a detrimental impact on mental health, families will go back to drugs and alcohol to cope, early intervention will fail. Lives will be lost, and families torn apart. Many are aware of the

dangers of long-term stress, addiction and chaos on your general health. Increase risk in heart disease, cancer, diabetes among others. This will have an impact on the NHS service. This will end up costing the NHS service more money and will add demand to an already stretched service. Some of the families using the Hub services have alcohol/ betting addictions. Accessing the gateway means that they have to pass pubs and betting shops on every occasion. This could mean a relapse is more likely and this will be detrimental to families, causing a ripple effect for any professional involvement.”

“Social services would see a huge rise in referrals and have to deal with even higher amounts of caseloads as the preventative work that Seashells does will be gone.”

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EQUALITY ANALYSIS

Consultees were asked to express any views on the equality analysis and/or if you think there is anything KCC should consider relating to equality and diversity for the Seashells Family Hub proposal. 47 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concerns about the impact on travelling to Sheppey Gateway / physical access to Sheppey Gateway in terms of public transport / users with disabilities:

“The equality analysis carried out by KCC fails to recognise the impact of children, families and young people choosing not to access the service at all due to the many concerning factors of the Sheerness Gateway. There will be poorer outcomes for an already deprived area which will later result in bigger financial impacts to society. The Sheppey Gateway is only listed as a Community Hub, not a Family Hub therefore the nearest Family Hub will be in Leysdown, 9 miles away from Seashells. The area in which the actual Family Hub will be is incredibly isolated due to poor public transport. The journey is 20 minutes in the car, 3 hours on foot with very few buses travelling to that area. The Community Hub at the Sheppey Gateway will not be delivering a full family hub offer therefore, residents will be forced to also travel to Leysdown for services.”

“A lot of people needing accessibility use Seashells services as they can park on the premises or the road outside the high street has three disabled parking bays along the length of the high street therefore not making it accessible for all. My mum is wheelchair bound and sit in the passenger seat of the car, due to the way the parking bays are set in Sheerness high street I am unable to safely get her out of the car and into her wheelchair, we are not the only family to have this issue so I feel it will stop a vast amount of users from using the services due to safety reasons.”

“Health inequalities and the inequalities that exist within the wider determinants of health should be considered within the proposal, for example, employment rates, proportion of those who have access to a car/van and fuel poverty. The EqIA does not consider blue badge parking for children, young people and families with disabilities. Though Sheerness high street does have on-street parking for blue badge holders, this is not specifically for those using the Sheppey Gateway and therefore there may be issues with availability. Sheerness High Street is also a road with no restrictions for vehicles, and therefore in times

with high traffic volume, there is a safety consideration for families when getting themselves and their children from their vehicles. Consideration will need to be made for the safety of these families.”

Concerns for proposals impacting users' mental health and comfort / ability to use services at Sheppey Gateway:

“Residents with poor mental health and disorders will be hugely impacted by the proposed change. In an area where trust and relationships are built through the staff and services that are delivered from Seashells this will be compromised by the change. Families will be distressed; they consider Seashells to be a safe haven that they can access support and guidance when they need. The Sheppey Gateway has reduced opening times, and the Community Workers will not be based there, it's only an outreach venue so those who need help will not be able to access this at certain times of the week. residents with poor mental health and disorders need consistent face to face support, something that the proposal will not be able to offer. Disabled residents will be impacted - there is only one disabled parking bay outside the Sheppey Gateway. and how do those clients with disabilities / wheelchairs / double buggy's access services provided upstairs?”

“People suffering with their mental health, anxiety, depression would not feel comfortable and many not able to access the Gateway as its environment is not welcoming and too overwhelming for many.”

“Young children with neuro-diversity would have created an attachment to Seashells and will prefer that site over the Gateway. Changing this element of routine for neuro-diverse children could impact their social skills & behavioural education. Additionally, having 2 hubs can create a quieter and more relaxed venue for families to visit.”

Concerns that proposed plans do not consider the relationship and trust that users have with the Seashells Family Hub / services offered / staff:

“The assessment does not take into account the unique value of Seashells' long-standing relationship with the community, which ensures vulnerable families access services tailored to their needs. Sheerness and the surrounding area face high levels of deprivation and child poverty. Many of these families are also coping with additional challenges, such as SEND, disabilities, and mental health issues making it essential that services are easily accessible and free from barriers. Changes to the location, staff, or structure of services would place further strain on those who may experience increased distress from having to access services in a new, unfamiliar location with unfamiliar staff. Without careful management, there is a risk that some families may stop accessing these essential services altogether, leading to a worsening of existing conditions and greater long-term consequences for both parents and children. The closure of Seashells Family Hub and the proposed relocation of services to the Sheppey Gateway does not adequately take into account the deep feeling of loss that would be experienced by families in the local community and the significant barriers this change would create for those who rely on these vital services.”

“While the Sheppey Gateway has all the amenities the families will need. Young children with neuro-diversity would have created an attachment to Seashells and will prefer that site

over the Gateway. Changing this element of routine for neuro-diverse children could impact their social skills & behavioural education. Additionally, having two hubs can create a quieter and more relaxed venue for families to visit.”

“The importance of the trust and respect that the dedicated professionals at Seashells have built up over two decades must be acknowledged as a prime reason for the 40,000 people to visit Seashells for support. Moving to the Gateway would immediately reduce the interaction of all those who feel a lack of trust in Council provided services (they feel more formal than Seashells) or feel they would not fit in because of their differences- even though these feelings may only be perceived and not reality.”

This section of the report summarises response to the questions posed surrounding the Millmead Family Hub in the consultation, as reported by consultees. 36 consultees chose to answer questions regarding this Hub.

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF ACCESSING FAMILY HUB SERVICES AT A DIFFERENT FAMILY HUB ON CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Consultees were asked to indicate what impact they think accessing services at a different Family Hub, like Margate (Six Bells), Cliftonville or Northdown Road, would have on children, young people and families. All 36 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concern about leaving a well-established place / environment that is well used and trusted by local community, which is particularly important in an area of deprivation:

“Millmead Children’s Centre has been there for 20 years supporting families, families are familiar with staff and feel comfortable attending, sending families elsewhere would be detrimental to these families engagement.”

“A lot of the families who use Millmead suffer a variety of social and wellbeing problems such as anxiety. They have made bonds with the MCCPL staff over years and taking these services away from them will have a hugely detrimental effect on their wellbeing and ability to function in society. They have come to know and trust our staff and for some of the families they rely on our staff to help them with day-to-day problems that they wouldn't feel comfortable asking a new person to help with.”

“Millmead is in the centre of a large estate in an area of high deprivation. Communities stick to what they know, and trust and much time will have been spent by staff building relationships with the local community and gaining their trust. If Millmead loses funding and is unable to deliver their current services, families are unlikely to go to the other Family Hubs where they don't know the staff, the hubs or the services, meaning families and most importantly children are likely to miss out on much needed support.”

“I think that families on Millmead would not generally access services at other Family Hubs as they would lose all confidence in KCC if through their funding cuts to Millmead they would lose their building. KCC has a very low level of confidence with residence on the Millmead estate and this was acknowledged by KCC who led on the development of the Sure Start Millmead programme.”

“It was evident that the staff and services that Millmead provides have had a transformational effect upon many individuals and families over many years. The local community that currently utilises Millmead may not feel confident in accessing services at a new location and having to build new relationships and trust.”

Concern current users / residents local to Millmead Family Hub would not travel to visit other centres / services due to available income / deprivation / having to use public transport to get there:

“Thanet Millmead is one of the most deprived areas in Thanet. Loss of this service may mean that those people who currently access services will not be able to travel to other children's centres.”

“The children, young people and families of Millmead, one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of Kent, would find it very difficult to travel over a mile to the next nearest Family Hub. Many families do not have access to cars to make this journey, moreover, families would struggle to afford the additional cost of bus travel and even if they could the area is not served well by reliable public transport. That leaves only the option of walking which would be difficult as this is along busy roads and uneven surfaces. Young families would especially struggle making this journey with children and even more so if they have buggies, prams or are affected by disabilities or mobility issues. Furthermore, this journey would be made even more challenging during winter months marked by short days, rain, ice and cold temperatures.”

“Families, children and young people do not necessarily have the means to travel to different family hubs. Your narrative with regards to distance is misleading as for a family you are actually expecting them to travel near as a 3-mile round trip. Clearly there is also a disconnection of understanding between the information KCC analytics recently published and the people who have decided to move forward on this consultation. Millmead is rated as a highest area for child poverty and deprivation, it is quite obvious what comes with these statistics- financial difficulty, anxiety, low mood, isolation, low energy due to lack of food- therefore not travelling nearly 3 miles to another hub. Millmead was an original Sure start building for a reason, positioned in a place it was needed to serve those families in most need this has not changed. Perhaps you should be considering to close another one of the KCC Thanet hubs and ensure families who live in the area of highest child poverty and deprivation can continue to access these services within a realistic accessible proximity to where they live.”

“A massive impact, this is in a very deprived area and many families would not be able to afford to access the other family hubs by public transport, many do not have cars, and it would not be acceptable to expect them to walk such a distance with babies and young children, especially in the long winter months. The families would therefore not be accessing these vital services that Millmead offer. It offers so much more than those listed in the document, it is a place of safety for many, a place of warmth and a LOCAL community place to seek friendship and support.”

Concern about impact on local area / already an area that has lost services / is in need of Millmead Family Hub / an area of significant deprivation:

“There will be absolutely nothing left in Dane Valley. This is a lifeline, and the other centres are just too far away for the families who have nothing.”

“I think it would have a huge and negative impact on the number of families accessing essential services for 0-5s, due to the distance and accessibility of other Family Hub buildings. Dane Valley (where Millmead is located) is one of the highest need communities

in Kent, with one of the highest rates of child poverty and poor early learning outcomes, and this should be reflected in the continued presence of a Family Hub.”

“Vital to understand the level of poverty experienced by many of the families served by the Children’s Centre. The IMD 2019 headline findings for Kent highlights the position of the Dane Valley ward in the league table as one of the most deprived LSOAs in Kent and Nationally. KCC published their Strategic Commissioning Stats bulletin in January 2020, so this provided an accurate and highly relevant backdrop to this Consultation. So, we have so many families in the ward who are below the poverty line, have very limited access to their own transport and are served by a poor public transport system, have young children who need to be accompanied to school at critical times, where family life creates its own pressures, where mental health issues are experienced significantly. Many of the service users place immense reliance on the support of the Millmead Children’s Centre because staff and volunteers are from the Dane Valley ward, understand the challenges of modern day living, are able to access a number of wrap around services and for whom the withdrawal of the such accessible services are bound to create additional pressures and realistically would mean for many service users of the Dane Valley ward they simply would not be able to access the services provided by Hubs at least a mile from their homes.”

PERCEIVED IMPACT FOR PROPOSAL FOR MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB ON OTHER SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS

Consultees were asked to indicate what impact they think the proposal would have on other services and organisations. All 36 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concern for impact on Millmead Family Hub services / other services currently in Millmead Family Hub building resulting in further loss of services and inability for services to work together:

“It would have a massive impact on all the services that run from the centre. It will mean more missed appointments because the centres are not accessible to them. Social services workload will double, the outreach team help in supporting the families to prevent social service action and work closely with social services with safeguarding issues. By closing this centre you are putting more children at risk, more vulnerable people at risk!”

“Other partner agencies who are based at The Centre include the Health Visiting Service, Midwifery Community Clinic, Adult Speech and Learning service, Antenatal services and Family Nurse Practitioner. Additionally, so many partner organisations locally provide help and support on a year-by-year basis. The outstanding reputation of the Centre is a main reason why these organisations can utilise the facility and more importantly work in a 'wrap around' way to avoid missed appointments and view families holistically. The closure of the Millmead hub would have a highly damaging impact on their services.”

“Millmead work under the ethos of the previous SureStart programmes, which means they are a true hub of partnerships form health, public health, voluntary and third sector organisations, removal of the funding puts the centre at risk and therefore the ability of these services to work in partnership from the hubs. Millmead also run a nursery, there is a

risk this may not be able to continue of the centre has to close due to lack of funding, in an area where the majority of the parents are eligible for the FF2 Early Years funding and with nursery places across Kent diminishing this would be a great loss.”

“The question is would Millmead Family Hub be able to function without the funding from KCC? I think it would probably have to close down. It has been managing on a very low budget with the previous cuts in funding. I think if the building closed it would have huge implications on other services as it is through the Millmead Family Hub that organisation access local residents. Meetings are held at the centre with other organisations and residents will agree to attend. I think we maybe back to 2000 where residents told me 'nobody cares about Millmead'. The Hub is a focal point for the community. The Hub is where community was developed. This was achieved by people meeting up and getting to know each other and understanding that they had a commonality through shared experiences. This would not be possible without the Hub. There is a lack of understanding on the issue in relation to this consultation. The Hub on Millmead is central to the maintaining of community on the estate. KCC would lose all credibility if they closed the Hub. The levels of need would increase especially Domestic Violence and Safeguarding, SEND, teenage pregnancies, unemployment and others. These would cost KCC far more than they would save on a closure scenario.”

Concern for impact on using other statutory services / health and care services / other services already stretched:

“Yes, increased Safeguarding and Social Services cases due to families not accessing support services that they need due to distance. This will reduce the 'savings' outlined in the proposal.”

“Impact on Safeguarding and Child Protection as referrals will have to go through local teams. Unavailability of emergency service for local community. Impact on Thanet District Council and local Social Services, Police and Health. Already deprived area this would make it more difficult.”

“Further strain would be placed on health and care services in the years ahead. It is likely that a significant proportion of current Family Hub service users at the Millmead Children Centre, which is currently accessed by over 1000 children aged 0-5 per year, would no longer be able to benefit from the services provided as they would be unable to undertake the journey to other Family Hubs which are all over a mile away. Many service users would find this journey too challenging so may not engage in the future or do so infrequently. It is anticipated that this would lead to worse health outcomes for children, young people and families in the Millmead area and as a result would put a further strain on health and care services in the years ahead. Risk of an increase in anti-social behaviour. It's expected that the cessation of Family Hub services in Millmead would directly contribute to an increase in anti-social behaviour. Millmead is a very deprived and challenging area and the Children's Centre itself has been vandalised in the past. Therefore, we would expect that a further strain would be placed on police and community safety services in the future should the Family Hub services be removed from Millmead.”

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EQUALITY ANALYSIS

Consultees were asked to express any views on the equality analysis and/or if you think there is anything KCC should consider relating to equality and diversity for the Millmead Family Hub proposal. 25 consultees provided a comment. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the dominant theme expressed regarding concerns of access to alternative services / alternative hubs / children's centres amongst vulnerable groups:

“Where’s the quality and diversity for the people living in severe poverty? Where's the equality and diversity for disabled people and those with young children in prams? They may not be able to afford the bus, or the bus may be too full to take them, or they may not be able to walk long distances or walk at all. Have you looked at the route? Is it pram and wheelchair accessible? I doubt it. I think you need to consider the area Millmead Children Centre is placed, the community it's within. Stop taking away their lifeline.”

The EqIA states - "The ability for residents to access the full (age) range of Family Hub services on offer, as opposed to the limited age-range activities at the commissioned centres represents a benefit to service users" is inaccurate as the likelihood is families will access fewer services. The document already states services are underutilised elsewhere; families would access them if they were what they needed in a place they could easily get to.”

“Unrealistic and short sighted. Millmead has continued to serve the community for 20+ years to a very high standard. The justification from KCC that families can access services with 1.5 (3 miles round trip) is ridiculous. The equality data is unrealistic and out of touch with regards to what it is really like to live in poverty.”

“The EqIA notes that the withdrawal of Family Hub services from Millmead will have an impact on age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity however the mitigation is centred on the provision of alternative services at Family Hubs located over a mile away. As stated previously, it is not feasible for many families to make this journey due to a lack of access to private transport, money for public transport and lack of safe walkable routes. The effect is especially prevalent for those families with disabilities or mobility issues. The EqIA needs to consider alternative mitigations to ensure that the closure of Millmead Family Hub does not result in worse health, social, physical and educational outcomes for young children in the area.”

PROFESSIONALS / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK

ANY OTHER PROPOSAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

Consultees were asked to make any other comments or suggestions for the proposals put forward in their own words. 74 consultees made a comment at this question. The core themes expressed are consistent with feedback observed at Hub specific free text questions. Example verbatim comments are shown below and highlight the key themes expressed:

Concern for the impact closure of the Hubs will have on local communities due to levels of deprivation and trust in local services:

“We understand that cuts may need to be made due to lack of funding, but closing the Seashells support services will only have a detrimental effect on hundreds of vulnerable adults and children in an already deprived area.”

“Millmead has been the centre of the Community for over 20 years and has a massive footfall. Moving more services into Millmead would have had a bigger positive impact on the most poverty-stricken area of Thanet. Families who are already struggling financially will now have to pay for travel to get to services that once would have cost them nothing. You will be adding to the financial strain of families already struggling to meet day to day costs.”

“This area is very deprived, and the service users have taken a long time to grow confident in their children’s centre and its workers, this change which obviously saves money will knock that confidence and once again they will feel like they don’t matter.”

“Millmead children’s centre was created by the families in Millmead for the families in Millmead. I know decisions are made on outcomes and data, but Millmead is the essence of community spirit, families helping families and this is hard to measure and quantify. I worry that without KCC funding Millmead families will be isolated and unsupported, and this will impact the health, social and emotional well-being of the next generation. As a children’s social worker in Thanet, it is my view that the outreach staff and the centre are key to children’s safety and well-being in this neighbourhood.”

“Working within family support for over 20 years, I have grave concerns about the current proposal by Kent County Council to end the funding they provide to Children & Families for Seashells Family hub services in April 2025. I believe, from the early intervention and preventative work I have witnessed, been a part of and evidenced on hundreds of occasions there will be a hugely detrimental effect to children’s educational attainment, wellbeing, and most importantly safety if this funding ends. Thereby resulting in a sharp increase in emergency and crisis situations, putting further strain on the already overstretched local authority funded health, social and public services.”

Concern for the perceived safety of alternative locations and whether they are suitable for the services that are proposed to move:

“Trying to cram high quality existing services into much lower quality existing spaces that are not fit for purpose is a poorly thought-out plan that will simply reduce quality of much needed services in an already struggling deprived area.”

“Sheppey Gateway will not be a safe space for many families like seashells currently is. Many families reach out to the staff as a lifeline. Security purposes, gateway building is not as secure as Seashells building and that poses higher risks for children.”

Concern for the perceived safety of alternative locations and whether they are suitable for the services that are proposed to move:

“Further comments refer to the impact on families who do not own their own transport and where there is a very poor bus service. Removal of the contract and the services Millmead currently delivers will mean immense difficulty for any local family needing to escort their children to more widespread locations especially in winter darkness and poor weather. The combined impact of this proposal will only exacerbate pressures that local families already experience.”

“We have serious concerns that many of the most vulnerable families will not feel confident and comfortable accessing new and different facilities, especially given that Millmead and Seashells have been so successful in transforming the lives of vulnerable and diverse families.”

“Sheppey Gateway is a cold building and unwelcoming space; Seashells is not and has built a positive reputation in a difficult to engage community.”

NEXT STEPS

This consultation report, along with a Cabinet Committee report and the Equality Impact Assessment, is due to be presented to Members of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee in November 2024. Following this meeting, a decision will be made on whether or not to implement the proposals. The consultation website will be updated once a decision has been taken: www.kent.gov.uk/familyhubsconsultation.

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DRAFT VERSION

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK DRAFT RESPONSES

The formal responses to the consultation have been independently analysed. The tables below draw out the themes from the consultation feedback as identified by the independent analysis.

Also provided in the table below is the draft response to the feedback themes.

The first section relates to feedback on Seashells.

The second section related to feedback on Millmead.

The third section relates to relevant feedback provided across both sites.

The draft KCC responses are provided for consideration by the Cabinet Member.

Section 1: Seashells.

Consultation feedback relating to Seashells (as detailed in the Consultation Report)	
Consultation Feedback	Draft KCC Response
Seashells must not close: vital to / an integral part of the community, used by many families; closing it would have a significant impact	<p>It is acknowledged that Seashells plays an important role for the local community.</p> <p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the centres.</p>
Gateway will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at Seashells	<p>It is acknowledged that the Seashells centre was purpose built. However, the services which are funded under this contract can effectively be delivered from many different locations and utilising the Gateway means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local families.</p> <p>Some capital investment can be made available from existing agreed budgets to make amendments to the Gateway location with regards to safeguarding and appropriate use of space.</p>
Seashells is invaluable for children; their development, enjoyment, wellbeing, socialising, soft play, nursery.	<p>The Family Hub offer across the whole county, including the proposed offer at the Gateway, will continue to assist with the development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising for children.</p> <p>The nursery provision is not one of the services commissioned under the Family</p>

	<p>Hub contract and therefore is not one of the services that would end if the contracts were not re-commissioned.</p>
<p>Seashells / the staff are welcoming, supportive, make you feel part of a family / concern staff will lose their jobs</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and a supportive place for whole families to come and receive support, advice and guidance.</p> <p>Staff that are currently delivering the Family Hub commissioned services at Seashells and Millmead are eligible for TUPE transfer. KCC HR colleagues are engaging with the providers on this issue.</p>
<p>Seashells offers key support to (new) mums / parents and babies, postpartum support and invaluable for parents raising their children</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the county provides precisely this support for all mums, including new mums and mums-to-be. This service will be available at Gateway if the contract is not recommissioned.</p>
<p>Gateway will have safeguarding issues; for children, being on the high street / possibility of passers-by / non-users / strangers walking in</p>	<p>Funding is available through the DfE Family Hub Transformation grant to undertake capital works to facilitate the safe and appropriate use of the Gateway site.</p> <p>This may include safeguarding the access following this specific concern being raised. This will not interfere with the universal access of the building but will alleviate concerns that children may be able to run out into the road.</p> <p>The site is used by other agencies, including Children's Services and it is considered beneficial for service users to be able to access the wide range of services on offer in the one location.</p>
<p>Seashells is local, accessible on foot, with pushchairs / for the disabled; many wouldn't be able to access other centres, nor afford to use transport</p>	<p>The Sheppey Gateway is a level access site and is situated in the middle of the town, approximately 0.2 miles away from the Seashells Centre.</p>
<p>Seashells has a free accessible car park, Gateway does not</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that parking is not available at the Gateway, however many Family Hubs across the county do not have dedicated parking for service users.</p> <p>Parking is available a short distance from the Gateway. However, users do need to pay for this.</p>

	<p>It is therefore acknowledged within the Equality Impact Assessment that the impacts of this change may be particularly felt by those with a disability that affects their ability to walk.</p>
<p>Seashells provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation</p>	<p>The network of Family Hub locations across the county are designed to be places that families can attend and meet other families. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing Family Hub services at Seashells and support their transition. We are also developing a network of peer mentors and Family Coaches that will help build the sense of community.</p>
<p>Seashells is a warm, safe, secure, trusted, reliable space.</p>	<p>The role that the centre plays in its own right is acknowledged. However, the Family Hub network across the county is designed to be a safe and welcoming place where parents can access a range of support and guidance. Since Kent County Council rolled out Family Hubs we have received positive feedback from families and children about how welcome and supported they feel.</p>
<p>Gateway is not family friendly</p>	<p>Our Gateway and Library spaces are universally accessible and welcoming for all residents of Kent.</p> <p>Funding is available through the DfE Family Hub Transformation grant to undertake capital works to facilitate the safe and appropriate use of the Gateway site.</p>
<p>If Seashells closed, we / many would be unable to attend anywhere else</p>	<p>Our network of Community Development Workers will help families with the transition to using the alternative site.</p> <p>The current proposals only affect the recommissioning of the Family Hub element delivered at Seashells and do not impact on the other services offered from there. Families and children will be able to access all the other services i.e. nursery, health services, food bank, etc offered from Seashells.</p> <p>The proposed alternative location at Sheppey Gateway is 0.2 miles away.</p>

<p>Seashells is good for mental health support, has mental health session</p>	<p>Subject to continued need and timetabling, the Family Hub service at the Gateway could provide sessions focused on mental health, particularly Perinatal Mental Health, as well as more generally focused on assisting overall wellbeing for families.</p>
<p>Gateway is used by too many other services: banking, library, clubs</p>	<p>The site is used by/for other services and other agencies, and it is considered beneficial for service users to be able to access the wide range of services on offer in the one location.</p>
<p>Seashells is a lifeline to many</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that the centre plays an important role for local communities.</p> <p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the centre and families can continue to access those services, if they choose to do so.</p>
<p>Seashells has outdoor space / we have no garden / children can play outside</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that the Gateway does not benefit from a secure open space. There are however other facilities locally where free open space is available for families.</p>
<p>Seashells is an information resource / they provide advice and signposting</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for whole families to come and receive support, advice and guidance. This includes signposting or referral to other available advice and support.</p>
<p>This is an area of recognised high deprivation; closing it would impact the most vulnerable / in need, pushing them further into deprivation</p>	<p>The level of deprivation in the ward is acknowledged. Patterns of deprivation have been present consistently within this community for a long time.</p> <p>A comparative Family Hub service (although not like-for-like) can be delivered from the Gateway setting, subject to specific timetable arrangements.</p>
<p>Seashells is safe for children, has door release button / children can play safely / away from the busy high street</p>	<p>Gateway is a structurally a safe building.</p> <p>Funding is available through the DfE Family Hub Transformation grant to undertake capital works to facilitate the safe and appropriate use of the Gateway site for the work with children and families.</p>

	<p>This may include safeguarding the access following this specific concern being raised. This will not interfere with the universal access of the building but will alleviate concerns that children may be able to run out into the road.</p>
<p>Seashells has health clinics, baby weigh clinics, health visitors</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the centres. The decision will not impact on the continuation of these services from Seashells.</p>
<p>Gateway is only open 4 days a week</p>	<p>We will have the opportunity to review the opening of the Gateway considering the additional services that will be provided.</p> <p>The provision of activity under the Family Hub contract at Seashells is approximately 14 hours a week. The provision of at least 14 hours Family Hub activity per week can be accommodated at the Sheppey Gateway.</p>
<p>Seashells has the food bank which many rely on</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as the food bank which are run from Seashells are not within the scope of the decision. Families may continue to avail themselves of this service, should they choose to do so.</p>
<p>There are lots of (free) clubs, activities, sessions, groups, invaluable to many who couldn't afford otherwise</p>	<p>Free sessions and activities are a key part of the Family Hub offer across the county and would be included within any timetable for services at the Gateway. Families across the county who access our Family Hubs' free services have offered positive feedback about the activities that are offered.</p>
<p>There is no private space at the Gateway</p>	<p>There are spaces at the Gateway that can be used for private sessions and confidential conversations.</p>
<p>Taking it away will cause more social problems, including an increase in referrals to family support services</p>	<p>The level of need that families who access Seashells have is below the threshold for statutory intervention and so we would not expect current families accessing these services to be facing issues that qualify for statutory intervention. As a result, we do not</p>

	<p>expect to see an increase in families requiring referral to the Front Door team.</p> <p>The duty to provide statutory services under Children Act 1989 or 2004 is not part of the current contract in place for Seashells and it is not a function that Local Authorities can commission out to voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSEs).</p>
Seashells has sensory rooms, used by many	The sensory room at Seashells was put in outside of the commissioned contract for Family Hubs and is therefore unaffected by this proposal.
Comments / reasons for not using Gateway / Gateway should not be used	The proposal to use the Gateway means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local residents whilst the Council works to address the significant financial challenges that it faces.
Seashells is inclusive / equality is all they know / everyone is welcome	The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for all families across all parts of our community to come and receive support, advice and guidance. This includes signposting or referral to other available advice and support.
Seashells serves some of the most vulnerable and deprived residents / areas / plans discriminate against those people / people living in Sheerness	The level of deprivation in the ward is acknowledged. A comparative Family Hub service (although not like-for-like) can be delivered from the Gateway setting, subject to specific timetable arrangements.
Consider the children / the impact on their lives and their futures without the safety, support, familiarity, importance of Seashells	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the centres</p> <p>The Family Hub offer across the whole county, including the proposed any offer at the Gateway will continue to assist with the development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising for children.</p>
Consider accessibility for users with a disability / mums with pushchairs	The Gateway site has level access and whilst it is across two floors, the site benefits from a lift for those users that require it.
Discriminates against those who are losing access to services, e.g. especially mums and babies	It is acknowledged within the Equality Impact Assessment that most users of the services are mums, children and babies. Therefore, the impact of these changes may be disproportionately felt by those groups.

	<p>However, the proposal to use the Gateway means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local residents whilst the Council works to address the significant financial challenges that it faces.</p>
<p>Consider those with SEN needs, the neurodivergent, discriminates against those if no longer able to access services</p>	<p>The proposal to use the Gateway means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local residents whilst the Council works to address the significant financial challenges that it faces.</p> <p>We acknowledge that changing locations presents challenges for families coping with additional SEND needs. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Seashells and support their transition, linking in with our SEND service as required.</p>
<p>Not representative of the area, needs to be a local / community assessment</p>	<p>The Gateway is a local space used to deliver services to the community.</p>
<p>If the funding is withdrawn, it is likely that Seashells would face no alternative other than to charge room rates, at the moment all room space is free of charge.</p>	<p>This is a commercial decision for the independent company running the centre.</p> <p>There are national funding streams available for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector that the company running the centre can apply for, if interested.</p>
<p>Families will not access Sheppey Gateway as it is seen as a negative place to go (i.e. you only go there if you have a problem with housing or benefits).</p>	<p>Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Seashells and support their transition to Gateway.</p> <p>Sheppey Gateway also houses a library. KCC Libraries are universally accessible and all residents in Kent are welcome. There is positive feedback from residents related to KCC libraries.</p>

Section 2: Millmead

Consultation feedback relating to Millmead (as detailed in the Consultation Report)	
Consultation Feedback	Draft KCC Response
<p>Millmead is local / accessible / many wouldn't be able to go elsewhere / unable to even afford the bus fare / mums with pushchairs can walk there / mums postpartum can access / others are uphill and inaccessible to mums on foot</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that the current Millmead site is accessible for local families.</p> <p>The Family Hub model across Margate includes three other centres all within 1.5 miles. It is acknowledged that this may present a barrier for some and that travel on foot is not possible for all.</p> <p>As a result of this feedback, KCC will provide parents and children bus tickets for those that previously accessed services from Millmead and now can't afford the bus fares to access the other Family Hubs from Margate.</p> <p>We maintain that there is sufficient provision to meet local need. Time-limited assistance to cover the cost of transport to the alternative venues would be offered as a means of helping support service users through the transition.</p>
<p>Millmead must not be closed: is much needed resource, relied upon by many families, offering lots to local often deprived families, closing it would be devastating, save money elsewhere</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that the centre plays an important role for the local community.</p> <p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the centre and are not funded by Kent County Council through the existing contract.</p> <p>The provision of activity under the Family Hub contract at Milmead is approximately 9 hours a week. The provision of at least 9 hours Family Hub activity per week can be accommodated at the other centres.</p> <p>KCC is required to make savings across a wide range of services to meet the financial challenge currently faced by the Authority. The Statutory Duty on KCC to provide sufficient access to Children's Centres can still be met and as such it is felt that it is acceptable to make these savings. The rest of the in-house Family Hub network was</p>

	<p>subject to similar savings in previous decisions.</p>
<p>Lots of deprived children attend Millmead: is invaluable for their development, enjoyment, well-being, socialising, soft play, nursery, Sure Start</p>	<p>The level of deprivation in the ward is acknowledged.</p> <p>The Family Hub offer across the whole of Margate will continue to assist with the development, enjoyment, wellbeing and socialising for children.</p> <p>There are three alternative Family Hub locations within Margate, all within 1.5 miles of the Millmead Centre.</p> <p>Families across the county who access our Family Hubs' free services have offered positive feedback about the activities that are offered.</p> <p>The nursery provision is not one of the services commissioned under the Family Hub contract and therefore is not one of the services that would end if the contracts were not re-commissioned.</p>
<p>The staff at Millmead are welcoming / supportive / we trust them and we and the children have developed close relationships with them</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for whole families to come and receive support, advice and guidance.</p> <p>Staff that are currently delivering the Family Hub commissioned services at Seashells and Millmead are eligible for TUPE transfer. KCC HR colleagues are engaging with the providers on this issue.</p>
<p>Millmead is a safe / warm / secure / comforting / familiar / welcoming environment</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for all families across all parts of our community to come and receive support, advice and guidance. This includes signposting or referral to other available advice and support.</p> <p>There are three alternative Family Hub locations within Margate, all within 1.5 miles of the Millmead Centre.</p>
<p>Millmead has a free accessible car park / others do / may not</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that whilst limited free parking is available at Northdown Road Family Hub, it is not available at all the alternative locations proposed. Many</p>

	<p>Family Hubs across the county do not have dedicated parking for service users.</p> <p>Parking is available a short distance from the other locations, however, users may need to pay for this.</p> <p>It is therefore acknowledged within the Equality Impact Assessment that the impacts of this change may be particularly felt by those that manage a disability that affects their ability to walk.</p>
<p>There are lots of clinics attended / health visitor / baby weigh / healthy child clinic</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the Millmead and are not within the scope of the current contract that is under review.</p> <p>There are national funding streams available for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector that the company running the centre can apply for, if interested.</p>
<p>Millmead is relied upon by new mums, provides postpartum support, breastfeeding support, used by lots of mums / parents with babies</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the county provides precisely this support for all mums, including new mums and mums-to-be.</p> <p>Infant feeding support and postpartum support are key parts of the service offer available in the other Margate Family Hubs.</p>
<p>Many families would no longer be able to attend, use services if Millmead closed</p>	<p>Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Millmead and support their transition.</p> <p>There are three alternative Family Hub locations within Margate, all within 1.5 miles of the Millmead Centre.</p> <p>Time-limited assistance to cover the cost of transport to the alternative venues would be offered as a means of helping support service users through the transition.</p>
<p>Others will not be able to offer the same level of service, it's not big enough, will not be able to house all the services on offer at others</p>	<p>The Family Hub services provided under the commissioned contract are available at the alternative Family Hub sites in Margate.</p> <p>Capacity within these location exists</p>

<p>Clubs, events, activities are free, couldn't afford to pay for such like, we attend lots of activities we wouldn't be able to otherwise</p>	<p>Free sessions and activities are a key part of the Family Hub offer across the county and would be included within any timetable for services at the other Family Hubs from Margate.</p> <p>The provision of activity under the Family Hub contract at Millmead is approximately 9 hours a week. The provision of at least 9 hours Family Hub activity per week can be accommodated at the other centres.</p> <p>Families across the county who access our Family Hubs' free services have offered positive feedback about the activities that are offered.</p>
<p>Change not good for those with anxiety - places, people, surroundings, means they would not be able to attend elsewhere</p>	<p>We acknowledge that changing locations presents specific challenges for families coping with anxiety or additional needs. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Millmead and support their transition, linking in with our SEND service as required.</p>
<p>Other hubs would be stretched</p>	<p>There is capacity within the other hubs to deliver services to families currently accessing Millmead.</p>
<p>Millmead has baby sensory rooms / classes</p>	<p>The sensory room at Millmead was put in outside of the commissioned contract for Family Hubs and is therefore unaffected by this proposal.</p>
<p>Millmead provides a social aspect / making friends / prevents social isolation</p>	<p>The network of Family Hub locations across the county are designed to be places that families can attend and meet other families. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Millmead and support their transition. We are also developing a network of peer mentors and Family coaches that will help build the sense of community.</p>
<p>Millmead is accessible for the disabled, all on one level</p>	<p>The other Family Hub sites are equally accessible.</p>
<p>Others are not family friendly, not set up for families and children</p>	<p>The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for all families across all parts of our community to come and receive support, advice and guidance.</p>

	Families across the county who access our Family Hubs services have offered positive feedback about the support they received from practitioners.
Millmead is a lifeline for many families	The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the Millmead.
Millmead provides lots of information and advice, signposting	The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for all families across all parts of our community to come and receive support, advice and guidance. This includes signposting or referral to other available advice and support.
Millmead is inclusive / equality is all they know, everyone is welcome	The Family Hub model across the whole county is designed to be a welcoming and supportive place for all families across all parts of our community to come and receive support, advice and guidance. Families across the county who access our Family Hubs services have offered positive feedback about the support they received from practitioners.
Consider accessibility for disabled, mums with pushchairs - Millmead is very accessible	The other Family Hub sites are equally accessible. However, it is acknowledged that the impact of changing service locations is likely to be more challenging for service users managing disabilities. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Seashells and support their transition.
Discriminates against those who are losing access to services, e.g. mums and babies	It is acknowledged within the Equality Impact Assessment that the majority of users of the services are mums, children and babies. Therefore, the impact of these changes may be disproportionately felt by those groups. However, the proposal to use the alternative Family Hub locations means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local residents whilst the Council works to address the significant financial challenges that it faces.

<p>Not representative of the area / needs to be a local / community assessment</p>	<p>The three proposed alternative Family Hubs are all local spaces used to deliver services to the community.</p>
<p>Consider those with SEN needs, the neurodivergent, discriminates against those if no longer able to access services</p>	<p>The proposal to use the alternative Family Hub sites means that the Family Hub service can be retained for local residents whilst the Council works to address the significant financial challenges that it faces.</p> <p>We acknowledge that changing locations presents specific challenges for families coping with additional SEND needs. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Millmead and support their transition, linking in with our SEND service as required.</p>
<p>Consider those with mental health issues</p>	<p>Subject to continued need and timetabling the Family Hub service at the alternative sites proposed, sessions will be provided focusing on mental health, particularly Perinatal Mental Health, as well as more generally focused on assisting overall wellbeing for families.</p> <p>We acknowledge that changing locations presents specific challenges for families coping with mental health concerns. Our network of Community Development Workers will work with families that are used to accessing services at Millmead and support their transition, linking in with our SEND service as required.</p>
<p>Consider safeguarding - others are not safe for children – location / building nor from other users</p>	<p>The proposed alternative Family Hub sites are all safe for children and families to access and are currently operational Family Hub sites.</p> <p>There are no health and safety concerns in any of the Family Hubs buildings in Margate.</p> <p>All staff who work in the Family Hubs services including those in Margate are Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checked and pose no risk of harm to children. All the staff working in the Family Hubs estate have receive comprehensive training to offer safe and evidence-based support to children and families.</p>

<p>In Margate, there are three Family Hubs close to each other. One of those should be closed to save Millmead.</p>	<p>The revenue saving (running costs) of closing one of the other three Family Hubs in Margate is approximately £41,000 and therefore would not meet the saving target.</p> <p>Millmead have been approached to ascertain the potential costs of hiring space to provide a KCC run Family Hub service from the centre (as opposed to a commissioned contract under which the provider provides the service from their own building). Hire costs have been estimated as between £65k and £85k per year.</p> <p>If KCC cease services at the location that costs £41k a year and hired space, the impact on the KCC revenue budget would therefore be an additional pressure of at least £25k (£65k minimum hire charge minus £41k saving at the closed centre). These are property costs, not staffing costs.</p>
<p>The variety of services available at Millmead is important and this cannot be replicated elsewhere.</p>	<p>The wider Family Hub network of services available to residents at the alternative sites is equally beneficial. The wider service offer available will adapt over time in response to the need of the community accessing the Family Hub network.</p>
<p>Important health concerns might go unnoticed due to lack of proximity to medical facilities since Millmead is the only place families go to.</p>	<p>Health services are outside of the scope of the commissioned Family Hub services and are therefore not part of Kent County Council's proposals to move out of Millmead should the commissioned contracts not be renewed.</p>

Section 3: Feedback relevant across both sites

<p>Consultation feedback relevant across both sites</p>	
<p>Consultation Feedback</p>	<p>Draft KCC Response</p>
<p>The loss of this significant revenue will result in the closure of both centres, with community midwifery being displaced.</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract. Other services such as nurseries and health provision would remain at the two centres and are not within the scope of the current contract that is under review.</p> <p>The extent and value of the commercial relationship between the two companies running the two centres and the various Health providers is unknown to Kent County Council; however, that commercial relationship is not within to scope of the current contract review.</p>

	<p>There are national funding streams available for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector that the companies running the two centres can apply for, if interested.</p>
<p>Limited availability of alternative clinical spaces should the Family Hubs in Seashells and Millmead close.</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract.</p> <p>The extent and value of the commercial relationship between the two companies running the two centres and the various Health providers is unknown to Kent County Council; however, that commercial relationship is not within the scope of the current contract review.</p>
<p>Most of the alternative locations that may be suitable for relocation of community midwifery services from Millmead and Seashells are already full given the outcome of the communities services consultation.</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract.</p> <p>Health Visiting and Midwifery services, whilst a part of the wider Family Hub network, are not within the scope of the current commissioned contracts. It is up to the companies that run Millmead and Seashells to negotiate their commercial relationship with the Health providers should they choose to do so.</p>
<p>Whilst the consultation document states that the proposals set out in the consultation do not directly impact Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT), there are concerns that the services KCHFT deliver will indirectly be affected.</p>	<p>The proposal is only related to the services that are commissioned under the Family Hub contract.</p> <p>Health Visiting and Midwifery services, whilst a part of the wider Family Hub network, are not within the scope of the current commissioned contracts and therefore could stay in place at Millmead and Seashells if required.</p> <p>Service delivery requirements for Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) can be reviewed regularly to determine whether additional capacity is required. This can be monitored through the KCC Public Health Commissioning team. Additional spaces can be made available if required on Sheppey at either the Queenborough Library co-location site or at the Sheppey Gateway. Clinical space is</p>

	<p>already available in Thanet at all three alternative sites – Northdown Road Family Hub, Cliftonville Family Hub and Margate Family Hub.</p>
<p>KCHFT is mindful that this could potentially result in both Family Hubs charging KCHFT for delivery space which has previously been provided free of charge as a way to secure additional funding streams.</p>	<p>This may present an additional cost pressure (approx £30k per annum) for the Public Health commissioned contracts to KCHFT.</p> <p>The commercial relationship between KCHFT and the two companies running Millmead and Seashells is not within the scope of the contract that is under review.</p>
<p>Concerns that the purpose of moving services is that KCC hopes to wind the services down?</p>	<p>KCC is not intending to wind down the Family Hub service. Investment from the Department for Education over the last three years has facilitated the transformation from our previous Open Access service to the new Family Hub model. Part of the funding is to ensure the service is operationally sustainable.</p>
<p>Families may not wish to access services in the building with children’s social services creating a barrier.</p>	<p>A strength of the whole Family Hub network is that it draws on the links across the wider Early Help system, including our social services support to assist families where needed.</p>
<p>Concerns that there has been a distinct lack of communication on KCC’s part to fully investigate the impact of the changes and a more thorough options appraisal should have been carried out to seek options that do not create such huge disparity in the level of service being proposed to what is required</p>	<p>An options appraisal was carried out in advance of the consultation, and this was detailed within the information available for residents.</p> <p>Following the consultation response, an additional option has been considered which assesses the possibility of not renewing the commissioned contracts, but instead renting space within the centres for Kent County Council to deliver the Family Hub services.</p>
<p>Safeguarding and child protection issues will increase if the centres close – lives will be lost.</p>	<p>Our Family Hub service provides a wide range of services for all families across universal and targeted levels of need (as the term ‘need’ relates to the Kent County Council children’s services offer). The universal and targeted levels of need sit under the threshold for statutory Children Services intervention who assess and support children in need, children who suffer or are at risk of suffering significant harm and children in care.</p>

	<p>The duty to provide statutory services under Children Act 1989 or 2004 is not part of the current contract in place for the two children's centres and it is not a function that Local Authorities can commission out to voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSEs).</p> <p>Families that have a higher level of need and where children are in need or are at risk of or suffer significant harm receive support from Children Social Work Teams and intensive Early Help. The statutory duties provided by Kent County Council in regards service delivery under the various Children Act provisions remains unchanged as a result of this proposal. These services are still available through existing channels and partnerships across the wider Early Years network.</p>
<p>The community pantry and clothes bank are vital for the community and should not be lost.</p>	<p>These services are not part of the commissioned Family Hub contract and therefore fall outside of this proposal.</p>
<p>If contracts not renewed, community midwifery will be displaced alongside other services</p>	<p>The community midwifery service sits outside of the commissioned Family Hub services at Millmead and Seashells and therefore the service delivery is not within the scope of the current contract.</p> <p>Despite this, in Margate all three Family Hub locations already include clinical space for use by community midwifery. The Sheppey Gateway can be adapted to include clinical space for community midwifery if required.</p>
<p>Impact on single dads and their mental health will be impacted.</p>	<p>Our Family Hub network across the county is a welcoming and supportive place for all parents and carers. Through our Start for Life insights work we have developed z-cards and one-minute interaction guidance for all Family Hub staff to help boost engagement with dads.</p> <p>Our continued work with Dadspace is developing our offer to fathers, with a focus on their mental health and the relationship with their children. If needed this is something that can be broadened to deliver specific sessions for dads in these areas.</p>

<p>There will be a large impact on schools having to take in children that have not had the early intervention that Millmead and Seashells Family Hubs offer.</p>	<p>The Family Hub service will still be available to local people online (for example the free Easy Peasy app) and at the alternative sites proposed.</p> <p>Any families in Margate and on the Island of Sheppey have several opportunities to engage with the Family Hubs services should they choose to do so.</p>
<p>Both of these locations were pilot Family Hub sites, how can they now be closed?</p>	<p>Both Millmead and Seashells have played an important role in the transformation of the Family Hub model in Kent.</p> <p>However, the financial challenges that the Council face are significant and all options for easing the pressure on the budget are being explored.</p> <p>The contracts for these two centres have always been time limited and they end in March 2025. It is therefore timely and appropriate to consider whether the services can be delivered to families locally in a way that meets their needs while helping to address the Council's financial challenges.</p>

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Submission Draft Working Template

If required, this template is for use prior to completing your EQIA Submission in the EQIA App. You can use it to understand what information is needed beforehand to complete an EQIA submission online, and as a way to collaborate with others who may be involved with the EQIA. Note: You can upload this into the App when complete if it contains more detailed information than the App asks for and you wish to retain this detail.

Section A

1. Name of Activity (EQIA Title):	Commissioned Family Hub Contracts
2. Directorate	Children, Young People and Education
3. Responsible Service/Division	Integrated Children's Services

Accountability and Responsibility

4. Officer completing EQIA Note: This should be the name of the officer who will be submitting the EQIA onto the App.	Ben Sherreard Programme Manager – Family Hubs
5. Head of Service Note: This should be the Head of Service who will be approving your submitted EQIA.	Dan Bride, Director of Youth Justice, Adolescent Response
6. Director of Service Note: This should be the name of your responsible director.	Ingrid Crisan Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services

The type of Activity you are undertaking

7. What type of activity are you undertaking?	
Tick if Yes	Activity Type
Yes	Service Change – <i>operational changes in the way we deliver the service to people.</i>
	Service Redesign – <i>restructure, new operating model or changes to ways of working</i>
	Project/Programme – <i>includes limited delivery of change activity, including partnership projects, external funding projects and capital projects.</i>
Yes	Commissioning/Procurement – <i>means commissioning activity which requires commercial judgement.</i>
	Strategy /Policy – <i>includes review, refresh or creating a new document</i>
	Other – Please add details of any other activity type here.

8. Aims and Objectives and Equality Recommendations – Note: You will be asked to give a brief description of the aims and objectives of your activity in this section of the App, along with the Equality recommendations. You may use this section to also add any context you feel may be required.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

This EQIA is intended to assess the potential impact of our decisions on persons with different protected characteristics. In particular, this EQIA has been prepared to help us have due regard to the need to: (i) eliminate discrimination; (ii) advance equality of opportunity; and (iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, in the exercise of our public functions. These issues are relevant considerations to be taken into account whenever a new policy, function, or system change is being proposed in the exercise of our public functions. This EQIA is also intended to evidence that these considerations have in fact been taken into account, and the weight given to them as part of our decision-making process.

The Case for Change

The Department for Education (DfE) has selected Kent County Council (KCC) as a Family Hub and Start for Life Transformation Authority. Family Hubs are about bringing together and integrating support services for children, young people, and families so that they are easier for people to access. The services within the Family Hub model include, but are not be limited to:

- KCC Children's Centres
- KCC Youth Hubs and community youth provision
- KCC Commissioned Health Visiting Services
- Community-based Midwifery care
- Other community organisations

In November 2023 KCC Cabinet took [decision 23/00092](#) to implement the Family Hub model across the County. At the time, that included transformation and efficiency plans for 56 Family Hub locations across Kent not including the two Commissioned centres, Millmead and Seashells (in line with the Kent Communities Programme [decision 23/00101](#), also from November 2023).

Due to the fact that Millmead and Seashells Family Hub services are both externally commissioned, they were not included within the scope of the Kent Communities Programme analysis.

There has been a sequence of decisions that deliver savings against what was the previous Open Access (now Family Hub) budget as set out in the MTFP (more detail in the next section). Firstly decisions were made that considered the Family Hub model itself and the buildings used to deliver the services. These decisions have been implemented, delivering savings through model redesign, staff restructure and building rationalisation. With the commissioned contracts ending in March 2025, the next consideration in sequence, as we seek to make the remaining saving outlined in the MTFP, is whether to renew these contracts or whether the service provision can be delivered differently, thus saving money for the Council.

The Council is facing very significant financial pressures, for a number of reasons as set out in 'Securing Kent's Future' (August 2023 and October 2023). The document sets out the urgent steps needed to return the Council to financial sustainability, by reducing overspend in its budget to avoid further need to use limited reserves to fund revenue overspends. This would weaken the financial resilience of the authority and limit the scope for the use of reserves to invest in transformation necessary to address the structural deficit.

The financial challenges faced by the Council cannot be ignored. The Council has statutory duties to deliver a balanced budget, provide statutory services, including adult social care and children's services, and secure value for money in all spending decisions.

There is a clear financial driver for this decision. The second driver of this decision is the current imbalance in the Family Hub delivery model across Kent and the resultant duplication of costs for the Council. Currently there are 50 Family Hub sites across the county, including within Swale and Thanet, which are staffed by KCC Family Hub practitioners. These centres provide Family Hub services for families in Kent staffed and funded from the CYPE base budget. By providing Family Hub services from these two independent centres there is an imbalance in the delivery model as these are the only two centres where services are externally commissioned. These centres link in with partners such as Health and VCS organisations. However the links to other KCC ICS/Early Help services are not as strong as within the rest of the KCC in-house network. We are also duplicating cost in terms of management (each District in Kent has a KCC District Manager for example), HR, IT and finance support through the commissioning of the two centres.

The commissioned Family Hub contracts cost the council £426k per annum. Analysis shows that the current Family Hub service delivers 14 hours of activity per week at Seashells and 9 hours of activity per week at Millmead that are directly commissioned under the contract. These hours can be accommodated at the alternative sites identified (Sheppey Gateway for Seashells and the three nearby in-house Family Hubs in

Margate for Millmead). Vacancies held within the Family Hub staff will accommodate the staff eligible for TUPE to deliver these sessions at the alternative locations.

Public Consultation

A proposal to not renew the two commissioned service contracts when they end in March 2025 was put to public consultation between 30 July 2024 and 22 September 2024. The consultation set out the rationale for the proposal, a summary of other options considered, and the detail of alternative arrangements for the delivery of Family Hub services for the impacted communities.

A consultation version of the Equalities Impact Assessment was also provided for review during the consultation and feedback was sought from respondents to highlight any additional considerations that should be made in regard to equalities.

Consultation Proposals for the Cessation of the Commissioned Family Hub Contracts

The proposal on which we consulted was to not retender the two commissioned contracts when they come to an end on 31 March 2025.

This will affect the following two contracts:

Children and Families Ltd	Seashells Family Hub, Sheerness
Millmead Children's Centre Partnership Ltd	Millmead Family Hub, Margate

Seashells

In relation to Seashells the proposal to not renew the contract when it ends in March 2025 would mean the end of KCC funded Family Hub services at the Seashells centre.

The services currently on offer at Seashells under the commissioned Family Hub contract include (*denotes booking or referral required):

- Baby Massage*
- Baby and Toddler Sing and Sign
- Breastfeeding Clinic
- Breast Pump Hire
- Little Talkers*
- Sensory Hub
- Solihull Antenatal Class
- Solihull Parenting*
- Stay and Play
- Triple P Parenting Course*
- 1-2-1 Family Work*

It is the proposal that a comparable (although not 'like-for-like') Family Hub service will be offered at the Sheppey Gateway as an alternative. The Gateway is less than a 5-minute walk from the current Seashells centre and subject to a specific timetable, the expected service offer would include:

- Baby Massage*
- Birth Registrations (Library and Registration Service)
- Citizens Advice Clinic
- Infant Feeding Support
- Little Talkers*
- Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Drop In
- Playground Creative Play (Libraries and Registration Service)
- Stay and Play
- Triple P Parenting Course*

- 1-2-1 Family Work

Millmead

In relation to Millmead, the proposal to not renew the contract when it ends in March 2025 would mean the end of KCC funded Family Hub services at the Millmead Centre.

The services currently on offer at Millmead include (*denotes booking or referral required):

- Baby Massage*
- Book Library
- Breastfeeding Support
- Breast Pump Hire*
- Cost of Living Drop in
- Citizens Advice Clinic
- Cygnet Programme*
- Garden Club
- Health Visiting Checks (delivered by Health Visiting team)
- Healthy Baby Group
- Introducing Solids Workshop
- Little Explorers
- Little Talkers*
- One You Service (delivered by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust)
- PCSO Drop In
- Stay and Play
- Triple P Parenting Course*
- You and Your Baby*
- 1-2-1 Family Work*

Thanet has the largest network of Family Hub locations available to residents, in line with the higher levels of need as set out in the [Kent Communities Programme \(KCP\) decision](#). In consultation with the relevant local practitioners, we believe that the in-house Family Hub network is sufficient to meet the needs of residents currently served by the Millmead Centre due to current underutilisation of the services on offer across the rest of the network. Alternative Family Hub locations are within travel distances that were accepted for wards with comparable need in the KCP decision. Cliftonville Family Hub is 1.3 miles away while Margate Family Hub is 1.4 miles away and Northdown Road Family Hub is 1.45 miles away. Millmead is located in Dane Valley Ward which has an identified need score of 69/100 (KCP data analysis). In the KCP decision, it was agreed to close the Ladybird CC in Queenborough and Halfway Ward which had a need score of 66/100. The nearest alternative location for Ladybird CC was 3.3 miles away.

The services available at the three alternative locations include (*denotes booking or referral required):

The sessions available at Cliftonville Family Hub include (as at June 2024 and subject to further timetable amendments): *booking or referral required.	The sessions available at Margate Family Hub include (as at June 2024 and subject to further timetable amendments): * booking or referral required.	The sessions that will be available from Northdown Road Family Hub by the end of March 2025 include: *booking or referral required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Beyond the Page* • Breast Pump Scheme* • Cygnet Course* • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Community Pantry (from September 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Breastfeeding Support Group • Breast Pump Scheme* • Citizens Advice Clinic • Cost of Living Support Group • Cygnet Course* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Massage* • Breastfeeding Support Group • Breast Pump Scheme* • Citizens Advice Clinic • Community Café Space • Cost of Living Support Group

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Child Clinic • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • My First Year and Me • One You • Sensory Room • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • 1-2-1 Family Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Groups and Services for 8-19yr olds (25yrs with SEND) • Health Visiting and Wellbeing Reviews • Infant Feeding Clinic • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Explorers • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • Midwifery Services • My First Year and Me • One You • Sensory Room • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • 1-2-1 Family Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cygnet Course* • Family Fun Time / Stay and Play • Food Bank • Groups and Services for 8-19yr olds (25yrs with SEND) • Healthy Child Clinic • Introducing Solids Workshops • Kent Adult Education Courses • Little Bookworms • Little Explorers • Little Talkers* • Managing Behaviour Strategies* • Midwifery Services • Outdoor and Indoor Sports Hall/Courts • Triple P Baby Course* • 'Understanding You, Understanding Your Child' Parenting Programme • Young Lives Foundation • 1-2-1 Family Work
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Consultation Feedback: Overview

In total 1,016 consultees provided a formal response using the questionnaire. 672 consultees chose to answer questions in relation to Seashells and 433 answered in relation to Millmead. 99 respondents provided comments that addressed the proposals for both sites. The demographic breakdown of the responses is provided in a later section.

64% of consultees responding to the consultation currently use the Seashells centre, whilst 20% indicated they had used the centre in the past. 16% indicated that they do not use, nor have they used the Seashells centre.

73% of consultees responding to the consultation currently use the Millmead centre, whilst 18% indicated they had used the centre in the past. 10% indicated that they do not use, nor have they used the Millmead centre.

Responses to the consultation did not focus on specific impacts for individual protected characteristic. Instead, commentary on equalities was most commonly used to reiterate the general sense of overall impact that the loss of the services at these centres may have on residents generally.

Of those answering questions relating to Seashells, the most common themes of feedback arising were that the centre is vital to the community (32%) and that the Gateway site proposed as an alternative will not be suitable and will not offer the same service (25%).

Of the specific issues linked to equalities that were identified by respondents commenting on Seashells, impact on children (14%), accessibility (10%), impact on mums (8%) and impact on those with SEND or that are neurodivergent (8%) were most commonly raised. However, these issues do not appear to have been raised in order to make a point about the impact on protected characteristics, but more to demonstrate the overarching sense of loss for the community as a whole.

Of those answering questions relating to Millmead, the most common themes of feedback arising were that Millmead is accessible locally and that the alternatives sites are not accessible on foot or by bus (53%) and that Millmead is a much-needed resource for deprived families locally (37%).

Of the specific issues linked to equalities that were identified by respondents commenting on Millmead, difficulties accessing public transport (20%), impact on children (17%), accessibility for those who are disabled or mums with pushchairs (16%) and impact on those with SEND or that are neurodivergent (4%) were most commonly raised. However, these issues do not appear to have been raised in order to make a point about the impact on protected characteristics, but more to demonstrate the overarching sense of loss for the community as a whole.

Consultation feedback relevant to individual protected characteristics is considered in more detail below.

Summary of Options

Five options were considered as part of the options appraisal ahead of the consultation:

- Option 1: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts and provide services within existing KCC locations.
- Option 2: Reprocure significantly reduced contracts.
- Option 3: Reprocure comparable contracts and close other Family Hub locations in other areas (as this would save building costs).
- Option 4: Reprocure comparable contracts and reduce services in alternative Family Hub locations (as this would save service costs).
- Option 5: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts but find alternative standalone locations for alternative provision.

One of the main themes that emerges from the consultation feedback is the importance of having these services available for the communities within the familiar, existing settings of Millmead and Seashells. In response to this feedback, we have explored a sixth option:

- Option 6: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts, but instead hire space for KCC Family Hub staff to deliver the services from within the two settings.

Option 1: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts and provide services within existing KCC locations. This option is the proposal for discussion by members and was the basis for the public consultation. It is expected that this option will achieve the £426k saving within the MTFP. As set out above, services would be available to residents from alternative locations. This option would provide consistency across the entire Family Hub service as it would mean that the whole provision is in-house. The consultation report and EqIA set out the impact on service users of this option, however it is expected that this option has the greatest impact on service users of all of the options considered.

Option 2: Reprocure significantly reduced contracts. This option would not achieve the full saving within the MTFP. It would mean that savings would need to be identified elsewhere to make up the shortfall as renewing the contracts, albeit on a reduced basis, would still require revenue expenditure. This option would also lead to a reduction in services available in the two locations, given the reduced contract value, requiring service users to access these services from alternative locations. There would also remain an inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as we would retain the two commissioned sites while the rest of the Family Hub model is delivered in-house. Currently there are 50 Family Hub sites across the county, including within Swale and Thanet, which are staffed by KCC Family Hub practitioners. These centres provide Family Hub services for families in Kent staffed and funded from the CYPE base budget. By providing these two commissioned centres there is an imbalance in the delivery model as these are the only two centres that are externally commissioned. These centres link in with partners such as Health and VCS organisations. However the links to other KCC ICS/Early Help services are not as strong as within the rest of the KCC in-house network. We are also duplicating cost in terms of management (each District in Kent has a KCC District Manager for example), HR, IT and finance support through the commissioning of the two centres.

Option 3: Reprocurer comparable contracts and close other Family Hub locations in other areas (this saving building costs). Whilst this option could achieve the full MTFP saving of £426k, it would not meet the saving requirement in the timeframe set out in the MTFP. It would also require further cuts to be made, when the Kent Communities Programme and Family Hub Model decisions (both November 2023) set out the network of Family Hub buildings in relation to need, including reduction in the number of children's centres across the county whilst retaining the number of centres required to meet the need in each District. This option would mean the re-procurement of the commissioned contracts, however access to services would be impacted elsewhere given the reduction in buildings to meet the £426k saving. This option would continue the inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as explained above.

Option 4: Reprocurer comparable contracts and reduce services in alternative Family Hub locations (this saving service costs). This option was discounted ahead of consultation because whilst it could achieve the full MTFP saving of £426k, it would likely take much longer to do so. It would also require further cuts to be made, when the Kent Communities Programme and Family Hub Model decisions (both November 2023) set out the network of Family Hub buildings in relation to need, including reduction in the number of children's centres across the county whilst retaining the number of centres required to meet the need in each District.. This option would mean the re-procurement of the commissioned contracts, however services would be reduced elsewhere to meet the £426k saving. This option would continue the inconsistency in our approach to Family Hub provision as set out above.

Option 5: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts but find alternative standalone locations for alternative provision. This would not achieve the full saving within the MTFP. This option would mean that savings would need to be identified elsewhere to make up the shortfall despite the fact the commissioned contracts would not be renewed. This is because revenue would be required to provide the service from other non-KCC locations within the communities. The revenue cost of hiring space locally is estimated at between approximately £130k and £180k per year were we to implement this option for both Seashells and Millmead, or between £65k and £90k for one location. This would represent a pressure on potentially both CYPE and Corporate Landlord budgets. As set out under Option 1, alternative provision is available from within existing KCC buildings (current Family Hubs in the case of Millmead and Sheppey Gateway in relation to Seashells).

Option 6: Do not renew the two commissioned contracts, but instead hire space for KCC Family Hub staff to deliver the services from within the two settings. This option has been developed in response to the consultation feedback (see Section 5). Many respondents expressed the view that the current settings (Millmead and Seashells) are in themselves important to service users and the communities. There is also the view that the cessation of these two contracts may impact the overall sustainability of the centres. As a response to this feedback officers have sought to understand the opportunity to hire space within the existing centres. This would mean a shortfall in the saving offered against the MTFP target, as rent would be payable. This is currently paid by the Corporate Landlord budget, not the CYPE budget. Early indications suggest that the combined rental costs to hire space at both centres would be between approximately £130k and £180k per year. This would leave a shortfall in the MTFP saving as only between £246 and £296k would be achieved under this option. It should be noted however that this would be subject to formal process and at this time scoping conversations have not taken place due to the providers resistance to enter into any conversations ahead of a decision. The rental cost represents the main pressure on the revenue budget. As explained above staffing increase as a result is TUPE is not expected to increase revenue pressure as vacancies are held currently across the network. It is suggested that this option is discounted as it would not deliver the full saving set out in the MTFP.

Summary of Impact and Justification

Within the consultation, a significant majority of responses were received by women (64%) compared to men (13%). The rest of the respondents marked that they would prefer not to provide their gender. There is a clearly identified crossover between sex and age as demonstrated in the consultation response where over 50% of respondents were between 25 and 49 years old (25-34: 27%, and 35-49: 25%). It is acknowledged that generally women bear the greater responsibility for childcare and as such the protected characteristics for sex and for age require careful consideration.

18% of respondents also identified that they manage a disability, with 27% of respondents preferring not to answer, leaving that question blank. Therefore, careful consideration must be given for the protected characteristic of disability, particularly where that intersects with sex and age as highlighted above.

Due to the nature of this service, it is also to be expected that the vast majority of respondents have children that would be impacted by these proposals (63%). Of the responses received, 53% identified that they have children between the ages of 0 and 5.

Option 1 would carry greater impacts for these characteristics as women, children and those with disabilities. They would be required to access the Family Hub services at different locations, in the case of Millmead, that may mean accessing public transport that could present a difficulty for any disabled individuals, anyone managing additional SEND requirements, those with pushchairs or with any additional equipment.

Option 2 would still carry an impact for those residents with protected characteristics given that on a reduced contract the expectation is that some service provision would be discontinued. This would create the necessity to travel to alternative locations to access services that have been displaced, despite some services remaining included at the two centres under a renewed, albeit reduced, contract.

Options 3 and 4 would have the least impact on current service users at Seashells and Millmead as they both provide for re-procurement of comparable contracts at both centres. However, in order to meet the financial challenges, cuts would need to be made elsewhere, thereby creating an impact on other residents.

Option 5 would have an impact on protected characteristics, however the scale of impact is difficult to define as the services would be relocated to as yet unidentified alternative locations. These locations may be less suitable for the provision of Family Hub services than the current alternative options proposed (a reasonable assumption considering they all currently accommodate community services) and therefore may be more impactful for residents with protected characteristics.

Option 6 would have similar impact to Options 3 and 4 as it allows for the continuation of Family Hub service delivery at the current sites. However, as with Options 3 and 4, cuts would need to be made elsewhere, thereby creating an impact for other residents.

The hours of service provision delivered under the contracts (9 hours per week at Millmead and 14 hours per week at Seashells) can be accommodated within the alternative locations. Therefore it is proposed that the provision will remain sufficient to meet local need, and that assistance in accessing the service from alternative locations is the main mitigating factor.

The sections below analyse the impact of the proposal on individuals with each protected characteristic in turn, however the primary impact on groups with protected characteristics centre around any additional difficulty they will have navigating and understanding the changes to the service locations; particularly if required to travel further to access the services offered by the Family Hub network.

This may likely include the need to use public transport. Transport analysis related to Millmead demonstrates that 54,189 homes are within a 35-minute bus journey from the Millmead centre. All of these 54,189 homes are within a 35-minute bus journey of an alternative KCC Family Hub location. The Sheppey Gateway is 0.2 miles from the Seashells centre and is served by the exact same public transport network.

A point to note, is that there are parts of Dane Valley Ward (in which Millmead is located) which are closer to the Margate Family Hub than they are to the Millmead centre. The distance of 1.3 miles quoted is the distance from Millmead to the alternative Margate Family Hub location. Some parts of the community are actually closer to the alternative locations than Millmead and as such are less than 1.3 miles away.

It is also acknowledged that there are likely to be impacts on residents with protected characteristics who already access services from our proposed alternative provisions (Margate Family Hub, Cliftonville Family Hub and Northdown Road Family Hub for Millmead and Sheppey Gateway for Seashells) when we consider that

there will be additional people accessing a Family Hub offer in those locations. The existing services at the alternative locations in Margate are not currently running at full capacity

Where there are crossovers between protected characteristics, the impact may be particularly significant. For example, a young mother with a child that has SEND requirements, or who is also from an ethnically diverse background, may find the changes particularly difficult.

It is worth making the general point here that any barriers to access for those with protected characteristics (such as those set out in the specific sections below) may lead to some residents choosing not to access the service at all. If this is unmitigated, then this would potentially lead to negative outcomes for residents in precisely the areas which Family Hubs are designed to improve. If residents do not access the infant feeding support they require through the Family Hub network, they may end up with poorer health outcomes for their child, greater impact on their own emotional wellbeing and a diminished parent-infant relationship. Therefore, the mitigations listed below are vital.

The proposed mitigations are as follows:

1. *Community Development Workers*

Highlighted below in relation specifically to the group with ethnically diverse backgrounds, our new Community Development Workers across the county will be able to help service users with the transition to the new service access arrangements.

2. *Reimbursement of bus fares for families travelling to new locations*

As a direct response to the consultation feedback, suggesting that we could reimburse bus fares for those attending the Family Hubs that previously attended Millmead Family Hub. Families would present their ticket at the Family Hub location they attend and be reimbursed by the Family Hub staff. This is likely to be a time limited offer with a view to easing the transition phase and mitigating any drop-off of service access as a result. The analysis demonstrates that the alternative locations do ensure sufficient provision for the local need, and this mitigation measure is designed to mitigate against any drop off due to the change of location.

3. *Alternative methods of access.*

As set out in the EqlA for the Family Hub Transformation decision, (available here [23/00092](#)) a range of support and guidance is available online for residents to access at any time. It is acknowledged in that EqlA that groups with protected characteristics may have additional needs when accessing services in alternative ways, including online.

4. *Access to a broader range of services from a single location.*

The use of the alternative locations will mean greater access to wider KCC services, such as SEND support (all proposed alternatives) or birth registrations and library services (Sheerness Gateway).

The two districts in question, Thanet for Millmead and Swale for Seashells, are both areas of high need, as set out in the Kent Communities Programme work. Given this, these two district receive the most funding from the Family Hub budget; 10.1% and 9.8% respectively. This is excluding the cost of the commissioned contracts, therefore, if the decision is taken not to renew the contracts, these two districts will still be the most highly funded.

The Kent Communities Programme (KCP) decision taken in November 2023 ([23/00101](#)) proposed a network of Family Hub buildings across the county. The KCP model was based on a thorough analysis of the need for services prevalent within all communities across Kent.

As highlighted above our analysis shows that the current Family Hub service includes 14 hours of activity per week at Seashells and 9 hours of activity per week at Millmead that are directly commissioned under the contract. These hours can be accommodated at the alternative sites identified (Sheppey Gateway for Seashells and the three nearby in-house Family Hubs in Margate for Millmead). Vacancies held within the Family Hub staff will accommodate the staff eligible for

TUPE to deliver these sessions at the alternative locations. It is therefore proposed that the provision delivered through the retained Family Hub network alternatives is sufficient to meet local need.

As a benchmark, a comparison of the number of KCC Family Hub locations per 10,000 people aged 0-19 has been made against the same metric for other Family Hub authorities. This comparison demonstrates that the KCC has 1.3 Family Hubs per 10,000 people aged 0-19. This is the highest proportion of Family Hubs per 10,000 people aged 0-19 when compared to other authorities with similar quantum of 0-19 year olds, as the table below demonstrates.

Authority	0-19 Year Olds (to nearest 10,000)	Family Hubs per 10,000 0-19 Year Olds
Kent	370,000	1.3
Essex	340,000	1.03
Birmingham	330,000	0.67
Surrey	290,000	0.72

Given the significant financial challenge facing the Council, the mitigation measures outlined, and the analysis provided, it is therefore considered justified to propose making the required saving by choosing not to renew these two contracts.

Section B – Evidence

Note: For questions 9, 10 & 11 at least one of these must be a 'Yes'. You can continue working on the EQIA in the App, but you will not be able to submit it for approval without this information.

9. Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity? Answer: Yes/No

Yes – an analysis of the protected characteristics of the respondents to the consultation is as follows:

GENDER	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Male	134	13%
Female	653	64%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	229	23%

GENDER SAME AS BIRTH	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	760	75%
No	1	0%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	255	25%

AGE	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
0-15	21	2

16-24	57	6
25-34	275	27
35-49	256	25
50-59	74	7
60-64	40	4
65-74	45	4
75-84	19	2
85 & over	2	0.2%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	227	22%

RELIGION / BELIEF	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	228	22%
- Christian	185	18%
- Hindu	5	0.5%
- Jewish	3	0.3%
- Muslim	11	1%
- Sikh	2	0.2%
- Other	15	1%
No	502	49%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	286	28%

DISABILITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	186	18%
- Physical impairment	71	7%
- Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)	17	2%
- Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy	82	8%
- Mental health condition	87	9%
- Learning disability	39	4%
- Other	10	1%

No	553	54%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	277	27%

PRESENCE OF CHILDREN	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
I/we have children	641	63%
- 0-1 year old	225	22%
- 2-5 years old	319	31%
- 6-10 years olds	187	18%
- 11-19 years old	177	17%
I am / we are expecting a child	62	6%
I/we do not have children	79	8%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	234	23%

SEXUALITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Heterosexual/Straight	686	68%
Bi/Bisexual	29	3%
Gay man	3	0.3%
Gay woman/Lesbian	10	1%
Other	3	0.3%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	285	28%

ETHNICITY	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
White English	665	65%
White Scottish	5	0.5%
White Welsh	4	0.4%
White Northern Irish	3	0.3%
White Irish	6	1%
White Irish Traveller	3	0.3%
Asian or Asian British Indian	5	0.5%
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	5	0.5%
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	3	0.3%

Mixed White & Black Caribbean	10	1%
Mixed White & Black African	6	1%
Mixed White & Asian	5	0.5%
Black or Black British Caribbean	1	0.1%
Black or Black British African	9	1%
Other	41	4%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	245	24%

CARER	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Yes	178	18%
No	569	56%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	269	26%

We also have the usage data that informed the consultation version of the EqIA.

10. Is it possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way? <i>Answer: Yes/No</i>	N/A
11. Is there national evidence/data that you can use? <i>Answer: Yes/No</i>	Yes
12. Have you consulted with Stakeholders? <i>Answer: Yes/No</i> <i>Stakeholders are those who have a stake or interest in your project which could be residents, service users, staff, members, statutory and other organisations, VCSE partners etc.</i>	Yes

13. Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
Please give details in the box provided. This may be details of those you have already involved, consulted and engaged with or who you intend to do so with in the future. If the answer to question 12 is 'No', please explain why.

A public consultation process was carried out between 30 July 2024 and 22 September 2024. The consultation gave an opportunity for service users, community groups, partners, staff and residents to give feedback on the proposals. During this consultation, face to face consultation events were held in order to ensure that the voice of the service users at each of the two impacted centres was captured.

Of the 672 respondents that commented in relation to Seashells, 45% opted to provide a response specifically related to equalities.


Of the 433 respondents that commented in relation to Millmead, 39% opted to provide a response specifically related to equalities.

Almost all of the response would be classified as indicating opposition to the proposal as set out at consultation. Given the demographic data above shows a high percentage of respondents were women, were parents and were between the ages of 25 and 49 it is reasonable to infer that individuals with those protected characteristics were opposed to the proposals.

14. Has there been a previous equality analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years? Answer: Yes/No
 Yes – the pre-consultation EqIA.
 There was an EqIA for the Family Hub model transformation linked to decision [23/00092](#). However, that EqIA did not consider the two commissioned Family Hubs specifically.

15. Do you have evidence/data that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity? Answer: Yes/No
 Yes - user data for each site that has been broken down by age, gender, ethnicity, and SEND requirements.
 Demographic data captured through the consultation responses (detailed above).

Uploading Evidence/Data/related information into the App
Note: At this point, you will be asked to upload the evidence/ data and related information that you feel should sit alongside the EQIA that can help understand the potential impact of your activity. Please ensure that you have this information to upload as the Equality analysis cannot be sent for approval without this.



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Section C – Impact

16. Who may be impacted by the activity? Select all that apply.

Service users/clients <i>Answer: Yes/No</i>	Yes	Residents/Communities/Citizens <i>Answer: Yes/No</i>	Yes
Staff/Volunteers <i>Answer: Yes/No</i>	Yes		

17. Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing? Answer: Yes/No
 Yes

18. Please give details of Positive Impacts

The proposal to not renew the commissioned centre contracts does not itself present any positive impacts for groups with protected characteristics. However, the proposed alternative provision does present some positive benefits:

Millmead

The proposed alternative locations for the service are Cliftonville Family Hub (1.3 miles away), Margate Family Hub (1.4 miles away) and Northdown Road Family Hub (1.5 miles away). The ability for residents to access the full range of Family Hub services on offer, as opposed to the limited age-range activities at the commissioned centres represents a benefit to service users.

Seashells

The proposed alternative location for the service is at the Sheppey Gateway and Library which is approximately a five minute walk from the current location.

The Sheppey Gateway already provides a number of services that residents with protected characteristics may find beneficial, such as advice about facing financial hardship and registering births. Having these services all in one location, reducing the need for residents, particularly those with physical disabilities and young mums with prams, from needing to travel to additional locations to access these services, represents a benefit.

Negative Impacts and Mitigating Actions

The questions in this section help to think through positive and negative impacts for people affected by your activity. Please use the Evidence you have referred to in Section B and explain the data as part of your answer.

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

<p>a) Are there negative impacts for age? Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>b) Details of Negative Impacts for Age</p>	<p>Children Usage data shows that at in 2023, 1449 families accessed Family Hub sessions at the Millmead centre and 1869 families accessed Family Hub sessions at the Seashells centre.</p> <p>As set out above, 54% of consultees indicated that they have children between the ages of 0 and 5 years old.</p> <p>The proposal to not renew the commissioned contracts could disproportionately impact those 0-5 year olds receiving support towards their development milestones associated with health, education, and parent bonding. They will be reliant on their parent/carers being able to access another centre, who may have to travel further to access groups and support, alternatively they may access provision less frequently.</p> <p>14% of respondents commenting on Seashells and 17% commenting on Millmead specifically raised the impact of the loss of the centre on children.</p> <p>An example of the feedback received from consultees is here:</p> <p><i>“The Isle of Sheppey is greatly lacking in services such as Seashells. Without this centre, there is nothing for the catchment age group to do in a structured setting with peers until they reach nursery age. Thus, depriving these children of much needed development skills such as interacting with peers and fine motor skills. These hubs allow new parents to the area to get to know what is available and to meet people. Without these centres those less fortunate could easily become forgotten about. They provide a wealth of information and support for parents of all ages and backgrounds.”</i></p> <p>The transport implications for parents/carers are discussed later but is likely to impact on this age group. If their parent/carer is unable to take them to the nearest alternative Family Hub, they may need to access alternative provision in the community or may stop accessing services. This could have an impact on their social, physical, or educational development.</p>

As set out above, any barrier to access could lead to poorer outcomes for children in families that require support from the Family Hub network, if not suitably mitigated. For example, they may suffer from poorer health outcomes if their parents do not receive infant feeding support when needed. Equally, they may suffer poorer outcomes and diminished social abilities if they do not access the early language support available.

Older Children and Young People – 6-18 Year Olds

Our usage data shows that in 2023, 384 older children aged 6-18 accessed Millmead centre and 759 older children aged 6-18 accessed the Seashells centre. Whilst these figures are significant, there is a noticeable drop off in the number of children aged 5 and over visiting the centres. This is partly due to the children reaching school age and partly due to the fact that the majority of sessions running at the centres under the contracts are aimed at children below the ages of 5. The KCC Family Hub offer covers the full range of ages from 0-19 (25 with SEND).

Of the consultees responding, 2% were 0-15 year olds and 6% were 16-25 year olds. Additionally, 35% of respondents indicated that they had children between the age of 6 and 19.

Similar to the above, the proposal to not renew the Commissioned Centre contracts will mean families with older children and young people will have to travel to different locations and sometimes further to access sessions, support and general advice.

The transport implications for parents/carers are discussed later but is likely to impact on this age group. If their parent/carer is unable to take them to the nearest alternative Family Hub, they may need to access alternative provision in the community or may stop accessing services. This could have an impact on their social, physical, or educational development.

Parent/Carers – 25-39 Year Olds

Our usage data shows that at in 2023 1,034 parents/carers aged 25-39 accessed Millmead centre and 1,407 parents/carers aged 25-39 accessed the Seashells centre.

Of those that responded to the consultation, the largest single group of respondents were 25-24 years old (27%).

We recognise that parents (most likely to be aged between 25 and 39) may need to access services differently, may need to travel to alternative locations and may receive a different type of service than previously offered. Travel costs could become a barrier to access and, if this is the case, this could affect their ability to access the support required when needed.

An example of the consultation responses received is provided here:

“The Millmead Centre now stands as an important community hub that helps many poor and deprived households connect with services that can help them. If you remove the services from this

hub, I strongly doubt any significant number would reengage with other outposts.”

15–19-Year-Old Parents

Our usage data shows that at in 2023, 56 parents aged 15-19 accessed Millmead centre and 151 parents aged 15-19 accessed the Seashells centre.

Making an assumption that all of the 0-24 year olds that responded to the consultation were doing so as parents of young children (as opposed to responding as young people in their own right) then 8% of respondents were parents below the age of 24.

Health outcomes for babies of teenage parents are well acknowledged to be worse than their counterparts, so access to Family Hub services for these parents and their children will be especially important to support good outcomes for their babies and/or children. The impact of further journey times may have a greater impact on this cohort as they are less likely to hold driving licences and will be more reliant on family and friends or public transport and walking to travel to access services.

As teenage parents are likely to be more reliant on the services on offer from Family Hubs, there is likely to be a larger impact on them and their children if they are unable to access a centre, exacerbating existing inequality of outcomes. It was demonstrable in the feedback that many respondents utilise a range of Family Hub services from the current centres, for example they may attend healthy baby clinics as well as the parenting programmes.

Elderly Parents / Carers (65+)

Our usage data from 2023 shows that 15 elderly parents/carers aged 65+ accessed Millmead centre and 15 parents aged 65+ accessed the Seashells centre.

Older parents/carers may be disparately affected as they may have increased mobility needs and experience greater difficulty travelling to alternative provision. They may also face more difficulty engaging with our digital offer making them more reliant on our outreach provision.

c) Mitigating Actions for age

The Family Hub digital offer, as it continues to develop will reduce the need to travel to access some support and guidance, as it provides resources for service users that can be access at any time. It is also true that the Family Hub buildings are all accessible regardless of age.

As set out in the introductory sections the hours of service provision delivered under the contracts (9 hours per week at Millmead and 14 hours per week at Seashells) can be accommodated within the alternative locations. Therefore it is proposed that the provision will remain sufficient to meet local need, and that assistance in accessing the service from alternative locations is the main mitigating factor.

Our Community Development Workers will be of particular benefit in mitigating the change in access arrangements for the service.

	<p>These officers will work with families if necessary to help ease the transition to accessing services in the new area, by helping them navigate to and through the alternative locations and ensuring the understand the session available to them at the new centres.</p> <p>This is considered to be particularly beneficial for the parents aged 15-19 as this group may require additional support in understanding and accessing the full range of services that they may need as young people and as young parents. If the need is considered to be great enough then we may consider looking at specific support groups for parents in this age group.</p> <p>Millmead Alternative provision is proposed at Cliftonville Family Hub, Margate Family Hub and Northdown Road Family Hub (1.3 miles, 1.4 miles and 1.5 miles away respectively). We can manage timetabling and scheduling of activities so that it considers when children, young people and families are available based on their age range and based on the local transport network. This will result in sessions being available for residents that need to travel, ensuring that services remain accessible.</p> <p>The cost of bus fares was raised by numerous consultees as a barrier to accessing the services if they moved to alternative locations. As a specific response to feedback within the consultation about accessibility of the other centres, KCC is considering reimbursing service users for bus fares paid to access the new locations (if they were previously accessing services at Millmead). It is proposed that the provision is sufficient to meet local need, and the mitigation is intended to guard against any drop off in service access as a result of the change of location.</p> <p>Seashells The alternative provision proposed is at the Sheppey Gateway which is approximately a five-minute walk away. This location will be closer than the existing Seashells centre for some residents and further away for others. However, the impact of the short additional distance is considered mitigated by the provision of the services at the Gateway.</p> <p>Parent Carer Panels will seek to engage and include a wide range of parents and carers at the different end of the age range to ensure inclusivity. The feedback from these groups will help continue to shape the service offer as it evolves over time.</p>
<p>d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</p>	<p>Family Hub Service Managers.</p>
<p>20. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</p>	
<p>a) Are there negative impacts for Disability? <i>Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>b) Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</p>	<p>We recognise that individuals with disabilities may need to access services differently, may need to travel to alternative locations and may receive a different type of service than previously offered.</p>

Travel could become a barrier to access and, if this is the case, this could affect their ability to access the support required when needed.

According to service user data from the year 23/24, there were 217 service users with Special Educational Needs accessing Seashells and 93 service users with Special Educational Needs accessing Millmead.

Of the consultees providing feedback, 18% indicated that they have a disability. 7% indicated that they have a physical impairment, 9% indicated a mental health condition and 4% indicated a learning disability.

10% of respondents commenting on Seashells and 16% commenting on Millmead raised the impact of the loss of the centre on those with physical disabilities.

Physical Disabilities

The proposal to not renew the commissioned contracts may adversely affect children with disabilities living within these catchment areas or children with parents with a disability, where they are required to travel further away to access services. Families with disabilities may find it harder to travel beyond immediate home locality due to having no transport and a greater reliance on public transport. Even where public transport links do exist, those with disabilities may still find it harder to access via public transport. This may be for mobility reasons, in the case of a physical disability where the requirement to travel by public transport is more challenging. Additionally, children with SEND may find increased journey times distressing.

An example of the feedback received during the consultation is as follows:

“Please consider the access for those who cannot walk long distances and for those with communities that would mean getting to another service would be an impossible mission.”

Where accessing a Family Hub is more difficult, families may access support less frequently or not at all, potentially having an impact on both the parent and the child’s wellbeing. The Health Visiting mandated checks are an exception to this where the frequency will not be impacted by accessibility of services.

Given that educational, employment, and wellbeing outcomes are all generally lower for those with disabilities, (outcomes for disabled people in the UK – Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)) this existing inequality may be compounded by increased difficulty accessing services, resulting in a disproportionate impact.

Service users with physical disabilities may have different needs from the physical environment such as for accessible toilets, hearing loops, ramps and other accessible features. Whilst the alternative locations are accessible, any lack of these features may

impact how comfortable residents with disabilities may be accessing services.

They may need to travel further or access a toilet within the local community.

Changes to buildings, staffing, timings, and the addition of co-located staff may be a challenge for some children young people and adults who struggle with change by the nature of their disability. New environments and the level of activity in those environments (for example, as a result of co-location and integration of services at the Sheppey Gateway) could also adversely affect those groups.

Mental Illness / Anxiety Disorders

5% of respondents commenting on Seashells and 1% commenting on Millmead raised the impact of the loss of the centres on Mental Health.

Our proposal to not renew the commissioned contracts may adversely impact those struggling with mental health and anxiety issues. They may be more sensitive to change and be more distressed than their counterparts by the need to access services from a different location.

Similarly, families with higher levels of anxiety may also find the need to access alternative provision more distressing. If not managed well, it is possible that some families will stop accessing our services, potentially exacerbating existing conditions.

SEND

Service users with SEND or sensory conditions will likely have different and more complex needs. Our usage data from 2023 shows that 96 people (3.1% of all users) with SEND requirements accessed Millmead centre and 229 people (5.5% of all users) with SEND requirements accessed the Seashells centre.

8% of respondents commenting on Seashells and 4% commenting on Millmead raised the impact of the loss of the centre on those with SEND.

An example of the feedback received during the consultation is as follows:

“Many of these families are also coping with additional challenges, such as SEND, disabilities, and mental health issues making it essential that services are easily accessible and free from barriers. Changes to the location, staff, or structure of services would place further strain on those who may experience increased distress from having to access services in a new, unfamiliar location with unfamiliar staff.”

c) Mitigating Actions for Disability

In relation to Millmead, the service offer at the alternative sites proposed (Cliftonville Family Hub, Margate Family Hub and Northdown Road Family Hub) already include SEND focussed sessions. Therefore, the impact of the greater distance to travel is somewhat mitigated by the availability of additional SEND services at these locations.

	<p>The cost of bus fares was raised by numerous consultees as a barrier to accessing the services if they moved to alternative locations. As a specific response to feedback within the consultation about accessibility of the other centres, KCC is considering reimbursing service users for bus fares paid to access the new locations (if they were previously accessing services at Millmead). It is proposed that the provision is sufficient to meet local need, and the mitigation is intended to guard against any drop off in service access as a result of the change of location.</p> <p>In regards to Seashells, the Family Hub offer at the Sheppey Gateway will be able to include SEND focussed sessions as dictated by local need. The alternative venue is close to the existing Seashells location and is accessible.</p> <p>Our Family Hubs, by working as part of the SEND Transformation Programme, will be able to further improve and develop our inclusion practice.</p> <p>The alternative sites proposed are all accessible with ramp access, lifts where required and disabled toilet/changing facilities.</p> <p>Staff within the alternative locations, including staff from other services within the Gateway location can be trained and encouraged to support residents with wayfinding within the new sites to help users that are unfamiliar with the buildings or who may struggle with new settings to access the services they need.</p> <p>Our Community Development Workers will be of particular benefit in mitigating the change in access arrangements for the service. These officers will work with families if necessary to help ease the transition to accessing services in the new area, by helping them navigate to and through the alternative locations and ensuring they understand the session available to them at the new centres.</p>
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Disability	Family Hub Service Managers.
a) Are there negative impacts for Sex? Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).	Yes
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Sex	<p>Our usage data shows that in 2023 1,997 females accessed the Millmead centre, while 1,029 males accessed the same centre. Our data also shows that in 2023, 2,861 females accessed the Seashells centre while 1,525 males accessed the same centre.</p> <p>The consultees were 64% female, which lends more weight to the assumption that females may be disproportionately affected as they are most likely to access our services currently. As such we need to recognise that women may be negatively impacted by the proposal to not renew the commissioned contracts.</p> <p>As set out above any barriers to access may lead to poorer outcomes for women. For example, if they do not access the services available at Family Hubs when they need them it could</p>

lead to diminished parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health if the change is not mitigated effectively.

As the consultation report sets out, there was little in the way of feedback that directly raised the impacts on sex, however the overall perceived loss and the impact generally was raised consistently.

An example of the feedback received during consultation is as follows:

“During my first pregnancy I was struggling to get out the house as I didn’t have friends that had a young baby as well. My mental health was struggling. The health visitor suggested Seashells to me. I struggle with social anxiety, but my husband encouraged me to go and came with me. Whilst there I met a group of 4 women all with babies of a similar age. 2 year later we are all still friends and our babies; now toddlers are still friends. We still use seashells as much as we are able to. I have since had twins, and again Seashells has saved my mental health postpartum. I honestly don’t know what I would have done without them and the groups.”

Our proposals would require residents to access services at alternative locations. In the case of the Millmead proposal, this would require a journey of 1.3, 1.4 or 1.5 miles to the nearest alternative centres. We would expect that most people would require public transport to make these journeys.

At Seashells, the alternative provision is a five-minute walk from the current location.

The crossover with other protected characteristics, including age, disability, pregnancy and those with carers’ responsibilities is likely to be greater as the impact on these protected characteristics would combine. For example, a mother with a disability will likely experience greater impact from the proposal given the additional difficulty that accessing the alternative locations may present.

c) Mitigating Actions for Sex

In relation to Millmead, the service offer will be provided at alternative sites, (Cliftonville Family Hub and Margate Family Hub) which will include sessions run by partners. Therefore the impact of the greater distance to travel is somewhat mitigated by the availability of additional services at these locations.

The cost of bus fares was raised by numerous consultees as a barrier to accessing the services if they moved to alternative locations. As a specific response to feedback within the consultation about accessibility of the other centres, KCC is considering reimbursing service users for bus fares paid to access the new locations (if they were previously accessing services at Millmead). It is proposed that the provision is sufficient to meet local need, and the mitigation is intended to guard against any drop off in service access as a result of the change of location.

In regards to Seashells, the Family Hub offer at the Sheppey Gateway will be able to include other sessions as dictated by local

	<p>need. The Gateway already provides other services, such as birth registrations, allowing women to access services in an area with which they are familiar. The alternative venue is close to the existing Seashells location and is accessible and will be able to accommodate breast feeding areas.</p> <p>Our Community Development Workers will be of particular benefit in mitigating the change in access arrangements for the service. These officers will work with families if necessary to help ease the transition to accessing services in the new area, by helping them navigate to and through the alternative locations and ensuring they understand the services available to them at the new centres.</p> <p>Specific plans as part of the wider implementation of the Family Hub transformation (not specifically linked to this proposal) to increase the Infant Feeding support for mums in Swale and Thanet, due to the higher rates of deprivation and lower prevalence of breastfeeding in these areas, means that additional support will be provided that is accessible for mums impacted by this proposal.</p>
<p>d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Sex</p>	<p>Family Hub Service Managers.</p>
<p>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</p>	
<p>a) Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender? <i>Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</i></p>	<p>No – consultees did not raise any specific impacts related to this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>b) Details of Negative Impacts for Gender identity/transgender</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>c) Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Gender identity/transgender</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>23. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</p>	
<p>a) Are there negative impacts for Race? <i>Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>b) Details of Negative Impacts for Race</p>	<p>Our usage data shows that residents who accessed the services at the two centres in 2023 are by a vast majority white British (62.7% at Millmead and 87.7% at Seashells). However the data shows that there are smaller groups of service users from ethnically diverse backgrounds accessing each centre, although no single group represents over 1% of the total usage of the centres.</p> <p>These statistics are backed up by the consultation response data which demonstrates that of the consultees responding, 66% indicated that they were White British. 24% chose not to answer the questions, while 4% indicated that they were ‘Other’. No other identified group had a higher response rate than 1% of all respondents.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, it is still true that people whose first language is not English may find it more difficult to understand the changes being proposed or understand how to access or apply for</p>

	<p>targeted support in the future. They may be more reliant on local access points.</p> <p>We also recognise that some ethnic minority families may not feel that the services are available to cater for their specific cultural needs.</p>
c) Mitigating Actions for Race	<p>As a general principle, the entire service will provide support to residents that will need to access services from different locations.</p> <p>The introduction of the Community Development leads across the county will help assist residents from ethnic minorities to help them access the services they need. The Community Development Workers are responsible for helping to engage traditionally hard-to-reach communities and broadening the network of services available within Family Hubs in line with the needs of the communities. These officers could work with the users within the existing centres to help support their transitions to the new centres.</p> <p>One particular mitigation worth highlighting here is the introduction of specific cultural awareness training related to Gypsy and Roma Traveller communities planned for early 2025. This training will empower the relevant Family Hub staff to better understand and meet the needs of these communities.</p>
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Race	Family Hub Service Managers.
24. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief	
a) Are there negative impacts for Religion and Belief? Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).	No – consultees did not raise any specific impacts related to this protected characteristic.
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Religion and belief	N/A
c) Mitigating Actions for Religion and belief	N/A
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Religion and belief	N/A
25. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation	
a) Are there negative impacts for sexual orientation. Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).	No – consultees did not raise any specific impacts related to this protected characteristic.
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Sexual Orientation	N/A
c) Mitigating Actions for Sexual Orientation	N/A
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Sexual Orientation	N/A
26. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity	
a) Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity? Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).	Yes
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity	As identified in earlier sections of this analysis, consultees were 64% female and 54% of consultees indicated that they have

children between the ages of 0 and 5 years old. The generally accepted assumption is that women that are pregnant or that are in maternity may be disproportionately affected as they are most likely to access our services currently.

As the consultation report sets out, there was little in the way of feedback that directly raised the impacts on pregnancy and maternity specifically, however the overall perceived loss and the impact generally was raised consistently. This may be due to the fact that a vast number of users of the centre are typically either pregnant or within maternity and so the impact of the changes on those that are pregnant or in maternity are perceived as the general impacts of the change.

We recognise that expectant mothers may need to access services differently. We have set out previously that the services outside of the commissioned Family Hub contracts (including NHS Health Visiting and Midwifery) will be unaffected by the proposal to not renew the commissioned Family Hub contracts. It is worth noting that responses have been received from both NHS Health Visiting colleagues and NHS Maternity services and they have outlined the impact they believe the proposals could have on their services – these are detailed further in the consultation report.

Pregnant women, or women in maternity may need to travel to multiple locations if they chose to continue to access NHS support at the existing centres, while attending wider Family Hub services at one of the proposed alternatives.

Perinatal mental health and Infant Feeding support is of particular importance for these groups. If the proposals result in a drop in women accessing these services then it is likely that women will suffer poorer outcomes in terms of their perinatal mental health.

Travel costs and accessibility could become a barrier to access. For example, if locations do not have sufficient facilities for pregnant women and those with young children (baby change, breastfeeding areas) then these residents may choose not to access the services. If this is the case, then without mitigations this could lead to poorer outcomes for these parents in terms of their own health and wellbeing and that of their children. Equally, the use of public transport for these groups will likely present more of a challenge, with cost already having been acknowledged as a potential barrier.

c) Mitigating Actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

As stated previously, the most relevant services to these groups (those provided by the NHS Health Visiting And Maternity services) are unaffected by the proposal not to renew the Family Hubs commissioned contract. Women will still be able to access these services in the current locations.

In relation to Millmead, women will also be able to access these services from the other Family Hub locations in Margate (as they can currently). These locations have benefited from investment through the Family Hub Transformation grant to make them breastfeeding friendly spaces.

	<p>As noted above, costs for public transport have been highlighted as a likely barrier to access. As a specific response to feedback within the consultation about accessibility of the other centres, KCC will consider how we could subsidise bus fares for residents travelling to the alternative locations within Margate.</p> <p>Specific plans to increase the Infant Feeding support for mums in Swale and Thanet, due to the higher rates of deprivation and lower prevalence of breastfeeding in these areas, means that additional support will be provided that is accessible for mums impacted by this proposal.</p>
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Pregnancy and Maternity	Family Hub Service Managers.
27. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for marriage and civil partnerships	
a) Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships? <i>Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</i>	No – consultees did not raise any specific impacts related to this protected characteristic.
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships	N/A
c) Mitigating Actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships	N/A
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Marriage and Civil Partnerships	N/A
28. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer’s responsibilities	
a) Are there negative impacts for Carer’s responsibilities? <i>Answer: Yes/No (If yes, please also complete sections b, c, and d).</i>	Yes
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Carer’s Responsibilities	<p>As set out previously, 63% of consultation respondents indicated that they have children (and therefore caring responsibilities) whilst 18% indicated specifically that they were carers.</p> <p>The proposal to not renew the commissioned services and relocate the services to alternative venues could impact carers and their ability to access provision.</p> <p>Alternative sites may be prohibitive for those with caring responsibilities as they may struggle to access the alternative locations easily. This may be particularly pertinent for young carers that may be more likely to rely on public transport and that have limited other options.</p> <p>An example of the feedback received from the consultation is as follows:</p> <p><i>“Being a parent and Carer who has always made use of sure start Millmead, I feel the centre would be a HUGE loss to the residents, who would be unlikely to travel to the other venues. Depriving children & families of vital support that’s been available for over 20 years.”</i></p>

	<p>As a result of these proposals carers may need to access services differently, may need to travel to alternative locations and may receive a different type of service than previously offered. Travel costs and accessibility could become a barrier to access and, if this is the case, this could affect their ability to access the support required when needed.</p> <p>The crossover with other protected characteristics, including age, sex and disability, needs considering as the impact on these protected characteristics combined would be greater.</p>
<p>c) Mitigating Actions for Carer's responsibilities</p>	<p>In relation to Millmead, the service offer will be provided at alternative sites, (Cliftonville Family Hub, Margate Family Hub and Northdown Family Hub) which will include sessions run by partners. Therefore, the impact of the greater distance to travel is somewhat mitigated by the availability of additional services at these locations.</p> <p>As noted above, costs for public transport have been highlighted as a likely barrier to access. As a specific response to feedback within the consultation about accessibility of the other centres, KCC will consider how we could subsidise bus fares for residents travelling to the alternative locations within Margate.</p> <p>In regards to Seashells, the Family Hub offer at the Sheppey Gateway will be able to include other sessions as dictated by local need. The Gateway already provides other services, such as birth registrations, library services and Citizens Advice. The alternative venue is close to the existing Seashells location and is accessible and will be able to accommodate breast feeding friendly areas.</p> <p>The introduction of the Community Development leads across the county will help assist residents to make the transition to accessing services from new locations. These officers could work with the users within the existing centres to help support their transitions to the new centres.</p>
<p>d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Carer's Responsibilities</p>	<p>Family Hub Service Managers.</p>

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