



# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITIES CONSULTATION – WRITTEN REPORT

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH



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# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

## Background

Kent County Council are proposing changes to the way we use our buildings to deliver some community services. These services are Children's Centres and Youth Hubs, Public Health Services for Children and Families, Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education), and Gateways.

Proposals have been designed by Kent County Council considering where there is greatest need for services. They include:

- Having fewer permanent buildings, meaning that some of our buildings would close - wanting to keep buildings in areas where they are needed the most.
- Co-locating more of our services, meaning more than one service would be available from some of the buildings visited.
- Continuing to deliver some services by outreach, which means they do not take place in a dedicated or permanent space but move around to when and where they are needed.
- Ensuring residents can continue to access services and information online.

Earlier this year, KCC launched a consultation to understand the views residents and stakeholders.

## Consultation process

On the 17 January 2023 a ten-week consultation was launched and ran until the 26 March 2023. The consultation provided the opportunity to find out more and provide feedback.

All proposals for the whole of Kent were detailed in a consultation document. The proposals were also broken down into 12 district/borough documents to enable people to easily see the proposed changes just for their area. A short animation video was also produced to succinctly show what is being proposed and why.

A consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out to assess the impact the proposals could have on those with protected characteristics. The EqIA was available as one of the consultation documents and the questionnaire invited respondents to comment on the assessment that had been carried out.

All information about the consultation was stored on the consultation webpage:

[www.kent.gov.uk/communityservicesconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communityservicesconsultation). Paper copies of the consultation documents and questionnaires were available from children's centres, libraries, gateways, adult education venues, and venues for Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, as well as upon request.

## How people could give their views

The questionnaire was the main way for people to provide their feedback about the proposals. This questionnaire was available as an online form, as a Word document that could be downloaded (and emailed to us or printed or posted), as well as paper copies in community venues.

Respondents were also welcome to give feedback by email, letter or telephone.

Twenty-four public drop-in events took place (2 events per district). Day time and evening sessions were available to accommodate people's work or care commitments.

Youth Hubs led engagement activities with the young people using their services to explain the proposals and encourage their input. This was done in a range of ways such as group discussions, filling in forms, and creating videos.

Other engagement included briefings with:

- Councillors (KCC and district/borough councils)
- KCC staff
- Local Children's Partnership Groups
- Partner organisations (NHS, Midwives, Voluntary and Community Sector Steering Group)
- Trade unions

### **Additional Engagement**

In response to feedback, a further 20 engagement sessions were undertaken to ensure that views were heard about impacted centres where either the response level may have been lower than anticipated or where issues had been identified. This included visits to children's centres, youth hubs, and SEND groups (for people with Special Education Needs and disabilities). Phone calls took place with families/carers of people using Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities to obtain their views.

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

- Press release
- Social media campaign
- Newspaper advertisements
- Posters at community venues (along with paper copies of the consultation material)
- Direct promotion with people that use the services impacted by the proposals
- Emails to stakeholder groups and partner organisations
- Inclusion in newsletters such as KELSI (for education professionals in Kent) and the NHS newsletter
- KCC's residents' newsletter
- Email to registered users of KCC's online engagement platform

Social media promotion reached over 816,000 people across a range of platforms. Impressions (the number of times promotional posts appeared on people's social media feeds) was over 1.7m. The social media promotion resulted in over 11,300 click through to the consultation webpage.

The webpage had 75,879 page views made by 25,965 people. Documents on the consultation webpage were downloaded 9,224 times.

## Points to note

- Consultees were invited to comment on the proposals and each of the buildings impacted 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.
- 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 provided to each of the buildings marked as 'leave' in the consultation documentation with the exception of New Beginning's Childrens Centre in Gravesham. The only comments received for the New Beginning's Childrens Centre were from consultees who entered the same open comment for all buildings marked as 'leave'. All feedback provided for other buildings are being reviewed by KCC. Responses to the impact questions for each of the proposed 'leave' buildings varied. Please note that for any of the specific building impact questions with less than 30 consultees answering, results are presented in terms of number of consultees answering instead of percentages.
- Feedback received by the KCC team via email has been reviewed for the purpose of analysis and free text comments have been included where applicable in this report.
- 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.
- 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 consultees responding

1,776 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire; 1,521 received via online submissions, 227 received via a hard copy questionnaire and 28 via Easy Read versions of the consultation questionnaire. The KCC team also received feedback via email / letters. 27 emails / letters were passed to Lake Market Research to review and include comments in this report accordingly.

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.

<b>RESPONDING AS...</b>	<b>Number of consultees answering</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>
As a Kent resident	1,379	78%
As a KCC employee (Kent resident)	114	6%
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	36	2%
On behalf of an educational establishment, such as a school or collect	33	2%
As a Parish / Town / Borough / District / County councillor	29	2%
On behalf of a friend or relative	22	1%
On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity	16	1%
As a representative of a local community group or residents' association	15	1%
As a resident from somewhere else, such as Medway	11	1%
As a KCC employee (non-Kent resident)	10	1%
As a Kent business owner or representative	8	1%
Other	40	2%
Prefer not to answer / left blank	63	4%

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## USAGE OF SERVICES UNDER CONSULTATION

- 50% of consultees answering use Children's Centres. 46% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Children's Centres. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (92% and 93% respectively).
- 16% of consultees answering use Youth Hubs. 15% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Youth Hubs. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (83% and 86% respectively).
- 41% of consultees answering use the Health Visiting Service. 35% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use the Health Visiting Service. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (82% and 82% respectively).
- 11% of consultees answering use the Children and Young People's Counselling Service. 12% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use the Children and Young People's Counselling Service. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (65% and 68% respectively) but a significant proportion use both in person and online services (22% and 27% respectively).
- 10% of consultees answering use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. 9% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (65% and 71% respectively) but a significant proportion use both in person and online services (18% and 25% respectively).
- 17% of consultees answering use Adult Education services. 13% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (72% and 72% respectively) but a significant proportion use both in person and online services (18% and 23% respectively).
- 20% of consultees answering use Gateways. 17% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Gateways. The majority of both groups use services in person at a building (66% and 65% respectively) but a significant proportion reported that they use both in person and online services (21% and 24% respectively).
- 64% of all residents taking part in the consultation and answering indicated they use at least one of the services under consultation.

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## RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS AND PERCEIVED IMPACT OF BUILDING CHANGES

- ‘Designing proposals where people have the highest service need’ – 44% of consultees answering agree and 42% disagree; 12% neither agree nor disagree.
- ‘Proposals to co-locate services’ – 39% of consultees answering agree and 48% disagree; 12% neither agree nor disagree.
- ‘Proposals to have fewer buildings’ – 29% of consultees answering agree and 61% disagree; 9% neither agree nor disagree.
- There are significant differences in response to proposals with a higher proportion of disagreement amongst female residents, residents aged 25-49, residents who have children / expecting children and residents who use at least one of the prompted consultation services. However, it should be noted that 47% of resident consultees who do not currently use any of the prompted consultation services disagree with the proposal to have fewer buildings.
- Consultees were invited to comment in relation to specific buildings and describe the impact the proposed changes would have on them or someone in your household. Response to all proposed ‘leave’ buildings have been included in this report. Consultees expressed concern that they use these services frequently and they are seen as a lifeline that provides much needed support / services for local families in the area. Users value the centre as being within walking distance and indicate they won’t be able to access the proposed alternative(s) as they are either unable to drive / use public transport or the public transport commute is too long / unreliable / sparse. Consultees also express concerns that proposals will have a detrimental impact on users’ mental health / development.

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## MISSING DATA IN UNDERSTANDING WHERE SERVICE NEED IS HIGHEST

- 35% of consultees answering via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment.
- The most common feedback is to review data on children’s centre usage / understand the importance of the children’s centres to those currently using (33% of consultees commenting), the availability and cost of public transport and the potential impact on non-car users (26%), consider the impact of proposals on the mental health of users / outcomes for those no longer able to access services (23%).
- 21% have concerns for whether users will be able to get to alternative service provision as they can’t walk to those outlined and need to access services closer to home.



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## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CO-LOCATING SERVICES

- 77% of consultees answering via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment.
- The most common feedback is whether users will be able to get to alternative service provision as they can't walk to those outlined and need to access services closer to home (51% of consultees commenting).
- This is followed by the availability / cost of public transport and recent service reductions (33%) and the practicality of co-located services / groups (22%) and the suitability of proposed buildings / setups (19%). 21% commented on the need to consider the impact of proposals on the mental health of users / vulnerable / for those no longer able to access services.

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## PERCEPTIONS OF DELIVERING SERVICES THROUGH OUTREACH

- 46% of consultees answering via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment.
- References to the concept of outreach being a good idea features in 24% of comments made. However, the majority of these comments also contain a cautionary note such as it depends on the service delivered, the service is well advertised and accessible to all to use.
- There are concerns that outreach services need to be accessible to potential users, either via locations close to home / easily accessible by public transport (21%) and the type of services being considered are often used 'as they need them / without much prior planning' and in a familiar place and therefore consideration needs to be given for how outreach services are organised (17%).
- 16% commented the suitability of the buildings needs to be taken into account in line with service delivery required for the services under consultation. 14% commented that the services under consultation will need to be assessed carefully to see if they are suitable for an outreach service compared to the service offered now.
- 12% commented that potential outreach services need to be regular and offered as a committed service so the current service offering isn't diluted and users are familiar with the services regularity.

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## ACCESSING KCC SERVICES DIGITALLY AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ACCESSING ONLINE SERVICES

- When asked for feedback on accessing KCC services digitally (not linked to the services under consultation). 64% of consultees answering indicated they feel confident about doing things online.

- A proportion of consultees indicated the safety of using technology to access services and the security of personal information is a concern (13% selecting), as well highlighting that KCC's digital services and information are too difficult to use (10%) and they do not feel confident in using technology (9%). 10% indicated that paying for devices and internet connection is too expensive and 8% indicated their internet is too slow.
- Consultees indicated that the most important consideration when accessing services online is the perceived ease of use / simple access / being user friendly (45%). This is followed by having an option of face to face service delivery / consultees indicating they prefer face to face access to services (23%). Clear information (12%), reliable links that work and compatible devices (12%) and security / safety / privacy (11%) are also important.
- 16% believe online access to services isn't an inclusive approach and cited the elderly, those with access issues and those unable to use online services as examples to illustrate their views. 11% commented that online delivery needs to be appropriate for the service in question.

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## FAMILY HUB MODEL PROPOSALS

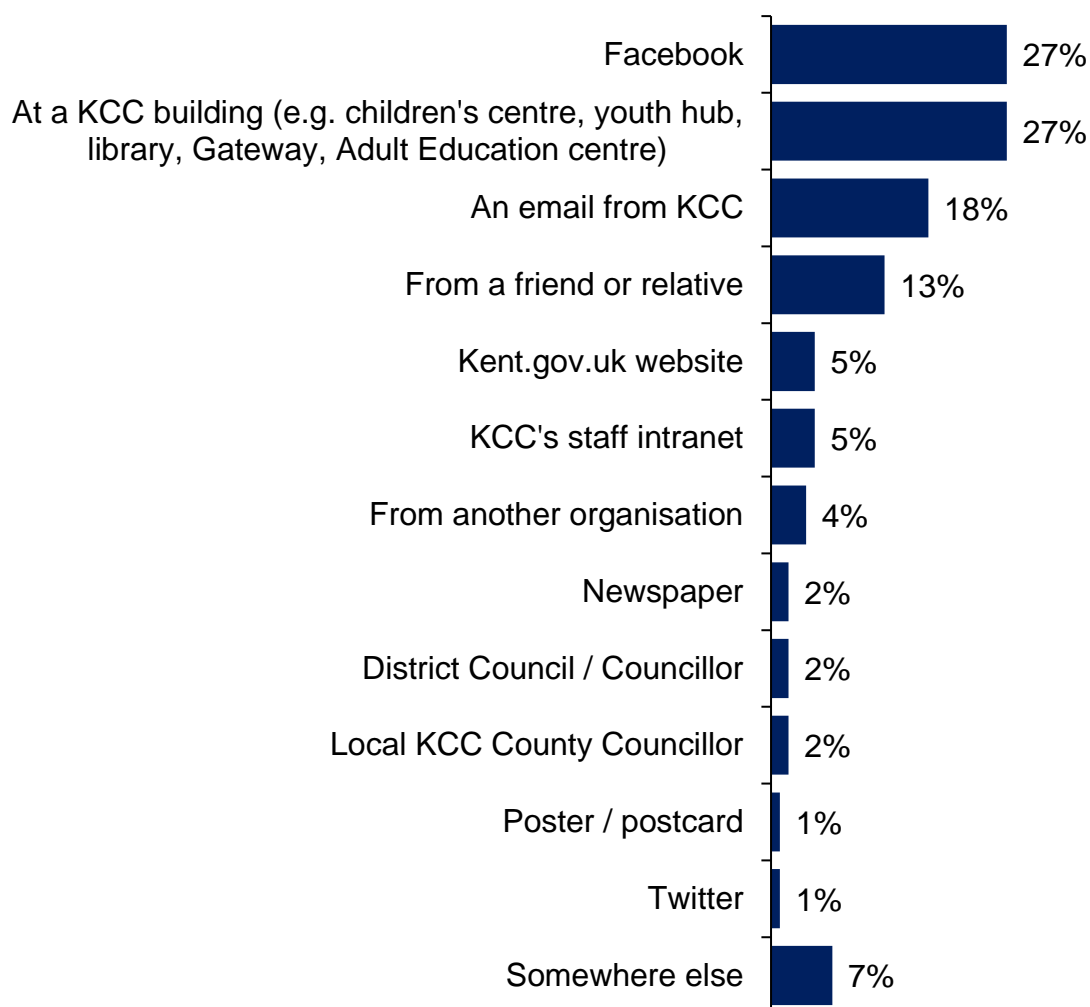
- 34% of consultees answering via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment.
- The most important consideration put forward for attention in the Family Hub transition is users being able to get there / travel there / location (46%). This includes consideration that some would prefer to, or only be able to, walk to reach the location or access via convenient and reasonably priced public transport.
- This is followed by ensuring access is possible for everyone that needs to (with consideration of different age groups / demographics and possible needs - 27%). This includes provision of service for all concerned and the equipment / space setting / staffing for all needs.
- 24% believe it is important that individual services provided under the Family Hub offering isn't diluted / remains distinct for each user group.
- 21% expressed concerns about the suitability of proposed space / buildings for the services under consultation and 18% expressed concerns about the compatibility of the range of services being provided in one place.

## CONSULTATION AWARENESS

- The most common routes to finding out about the consultation is via Facebook (27%) and at a KCC building, e.g. children’s centre, youth hub, library, Gateway, Adult Education centre (27%).
- 18% indicated they found out through an email from KCC.
- 13% indicated they found out through a friend or relative.

### How did you find out about this consultation?

Base: all answering (1,606), consultees had the option to select more than one response.



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Facebook	436	27%
At a KCC building (e.g., children’s centre, youth hub, library, Gateway, Adult Education Centre)	434	27%
An email from KCC	295	18%
From a friend or relative	207	13%

<b>SUPPORTING DATA</b>	<b>Number of consultees answering</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>
Kent.gov.uk website	83	5%
KCC's staff intranet	73	5%
From another organisation	70	4%
Newspaper	34	2%
District Council / Councillor	32	2%
Local KCC County Councillor	25	2%
Poster / postcard	15	1%
Twitter	9	1%
Somewhere else	112	7%

## SERVICE USAGE

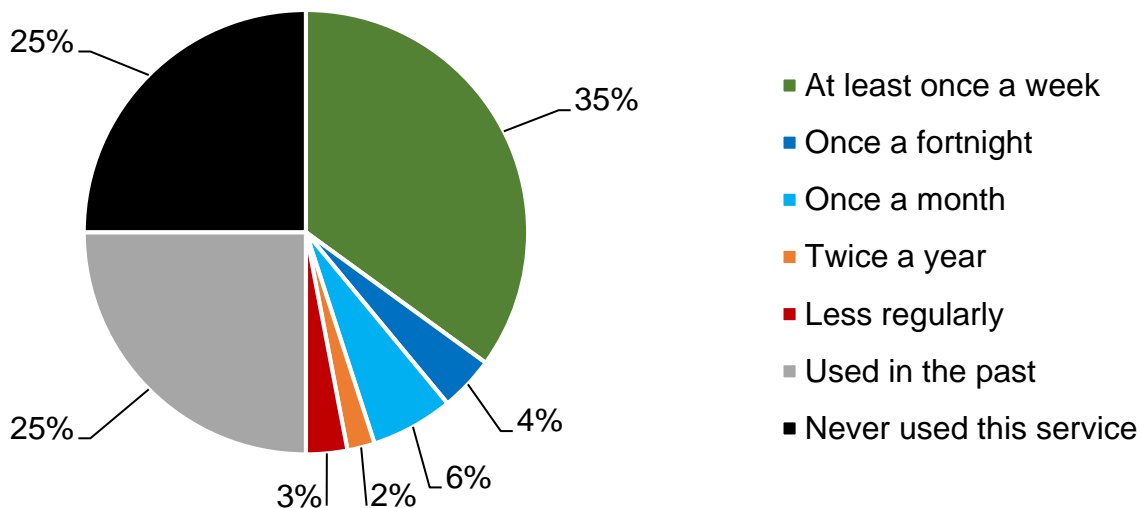
This section of the report summarises current and historic use of each of the services referenced in the consultation, as reported by consultees.

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES

- 50% of consultees answering indicated they currently use Children's Centres. 45% of consultees answering indicated they personally use children's centres at least once a month (35% at least once a week, 4% once a fortnight and 6% once a month).
- 25% of consultees answering indicated they have used Children's Centres in the past and 25% indicated they have never used them.

#### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use Children's Centres...?**

Base: all answering (1,518)

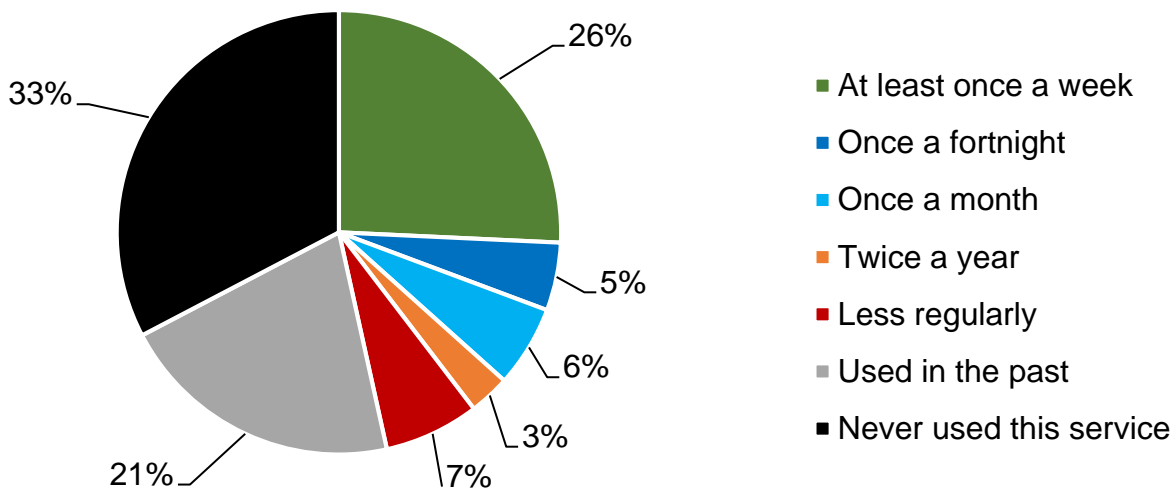


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	524	35%
Once a fortnight	60	4%
Once a month	94	6%
Twice a year	37	2%
Less regularly	46	3%
Used in the past	372	25%
Never used this service	385	25%

- 46% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Children’s Centres. 37% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (26% at least once a week, 5% once a fortnight and 6% once a month).
- 21% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used Children’s Centres in the past and 33% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use Children’s Centres ...?**

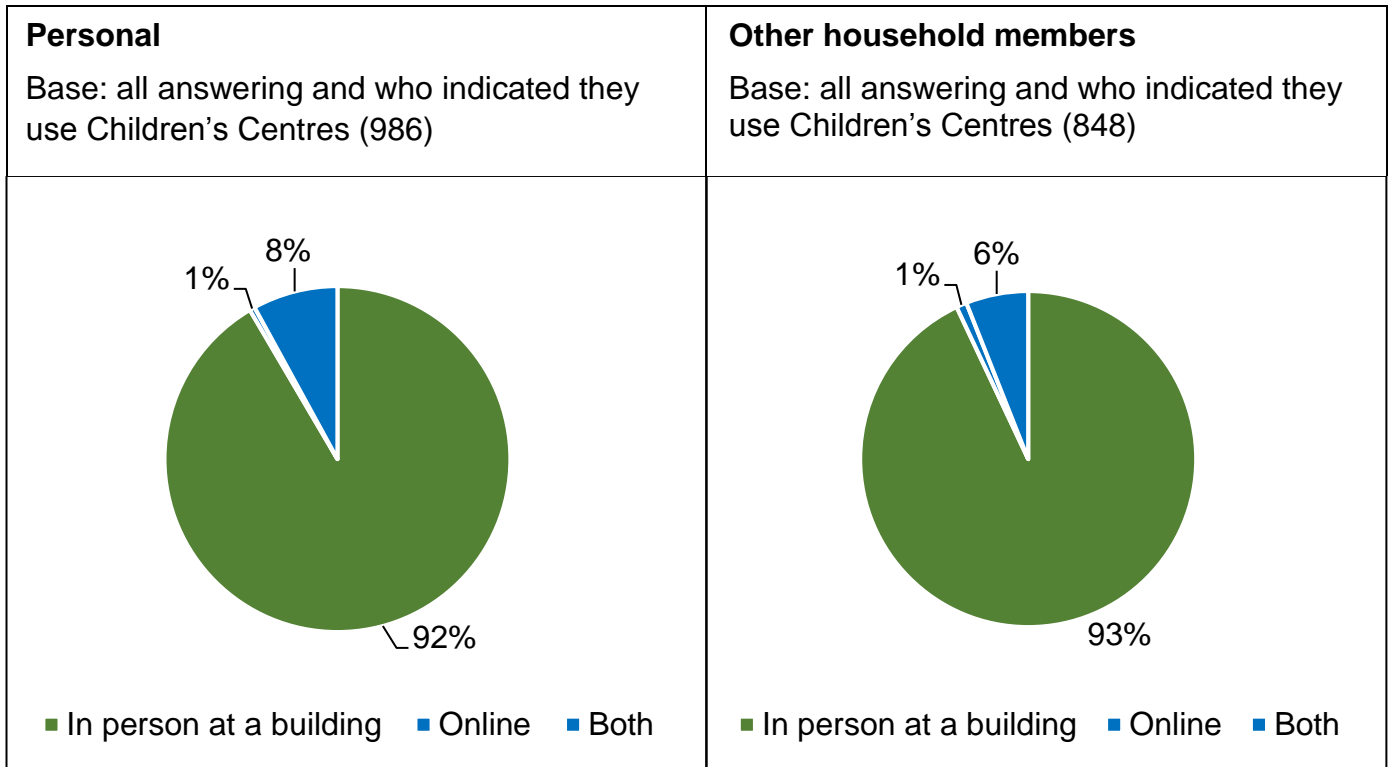
Base: all answering (1,484)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	381	26%
Once a fortnight	68	5%
Once a month	94	6%
Twice a year	46	3%
Less regularly	96	7%
Used in the past	315	21%
Never used this service	484	33%

- 92% of consultees who personally use Children’s Centres indicated they use them in person at a building. 8% use Children’s Centre services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 93% indicated they use them in person at a building. 6% use Children’s Centre services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use Children’s Centres…?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	903	92%
Online	8	1%
Both	75	8%

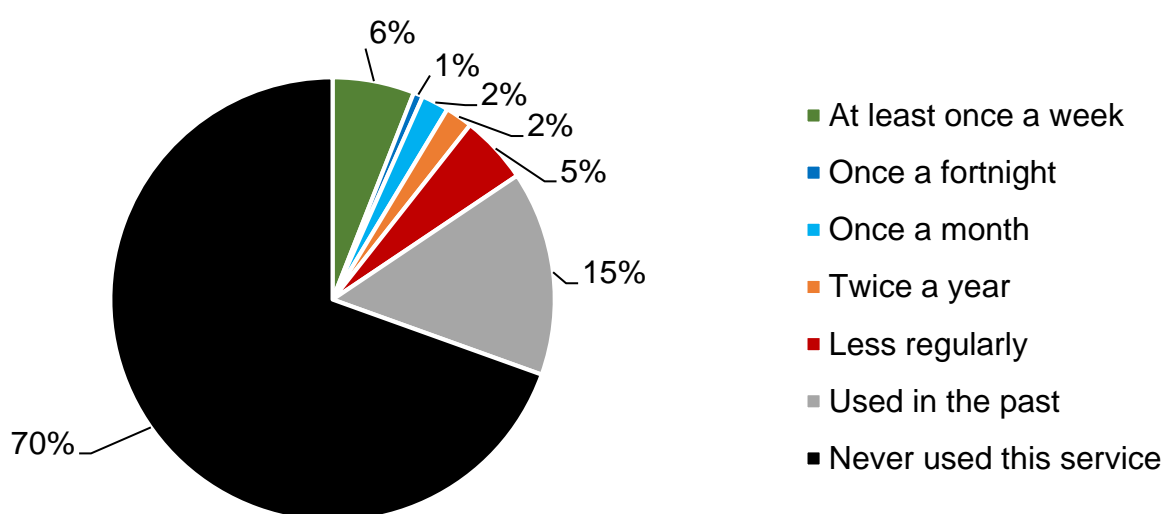
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	787	93%
Online	8	1%
Both	53	6%

## YOUTH HUBS

- 16% of consultees answering indicated they currently use youth hubs. 9% of consultees answering indicated they personally use Youth Hubs at least once a month (6% at least once a week, 1% once a fortnight and 2% once a month).
- 15% of consultees answering indicated they have used Youth Hubs in the past and 70% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use Youth Hubs...?**

Base: all answering (1,405)



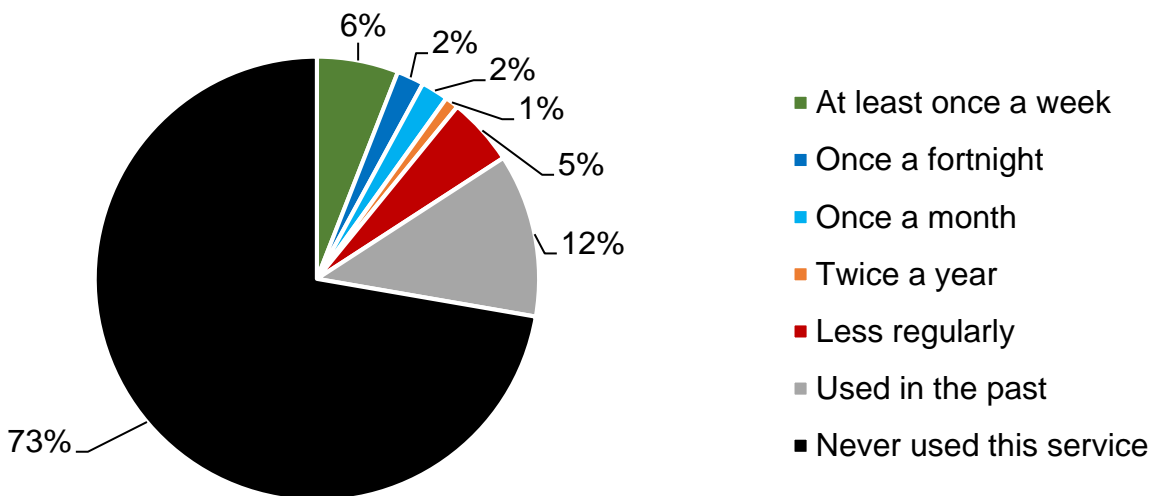
SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	89	6%
Once a fortnight	10	1%
Once a month	22	2%
Twice a year	28	2%
Less regularly	71	5%
Used in the past	208	15%
Never used this service	977	70%



- 15% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Youth Hubs. 10% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (6% at least once a week, 2% once a fortnight and 2% once a month).
- 12% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used Youth Hubs in the past and 73% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use Youth Hubs...?**

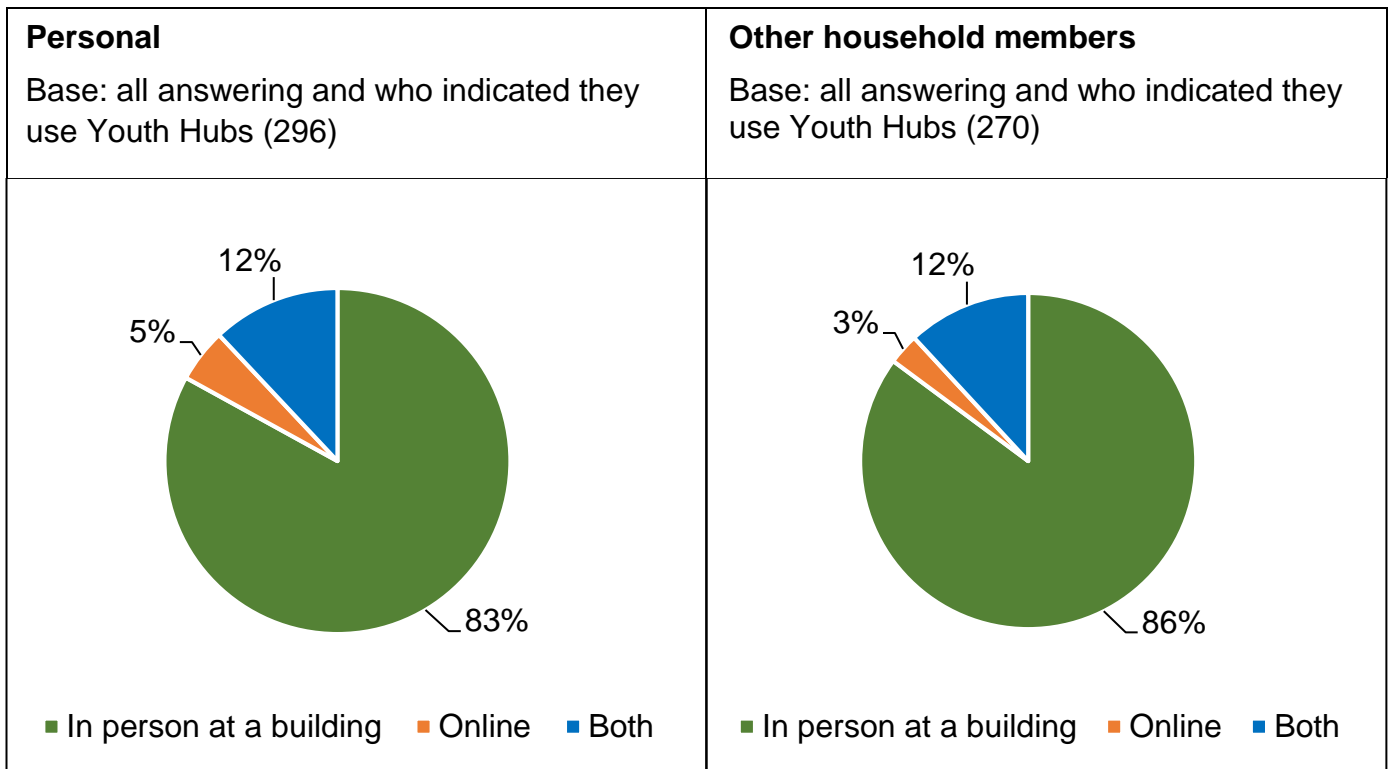
Base: all answering (1,407)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	81	6%
Once a fortnight	22	2%
Once a month	34	2%
Twice a year	14	1%
Less regularly	64	5%
Used in the past	162	12%
Never used this service	1,030	73%

- 83% of consultees who personally use Youth Hubs indicated they use them in person at a building. 5% use these services online and 12% use these services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 86% indicated they use them in person at a building. 3% use these services online and 12% use these services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use Youth Hubs...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	246	83%
Online	15	5%
Both	35	12%

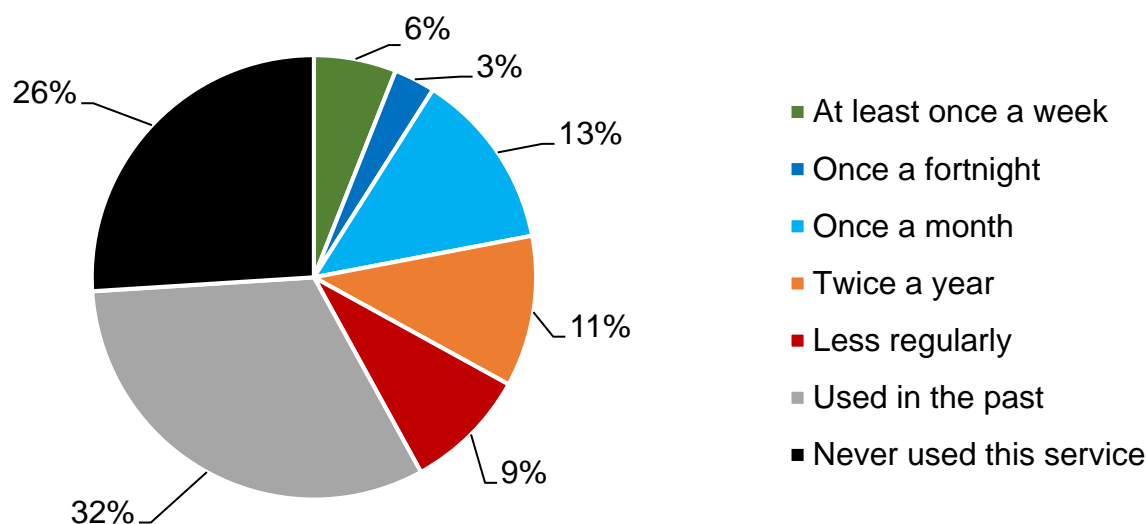
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	231	86%
Online	7	3%
Both	32	12%

## HEALTH VISITING SERVICE

- 41% of consultees answering indicated they currently use the Health Visiting Service. 22% of consultees answering indicated they personally use the Health Visiting Service at least once a month (6% at least once a week, 3% once a fortnight and 13% once a month).
- 32% of consultees answering indicated they have used the Health Visiting Service in the past and 26% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use the Health Visiting Service...?**

Base: all answering (1,461)

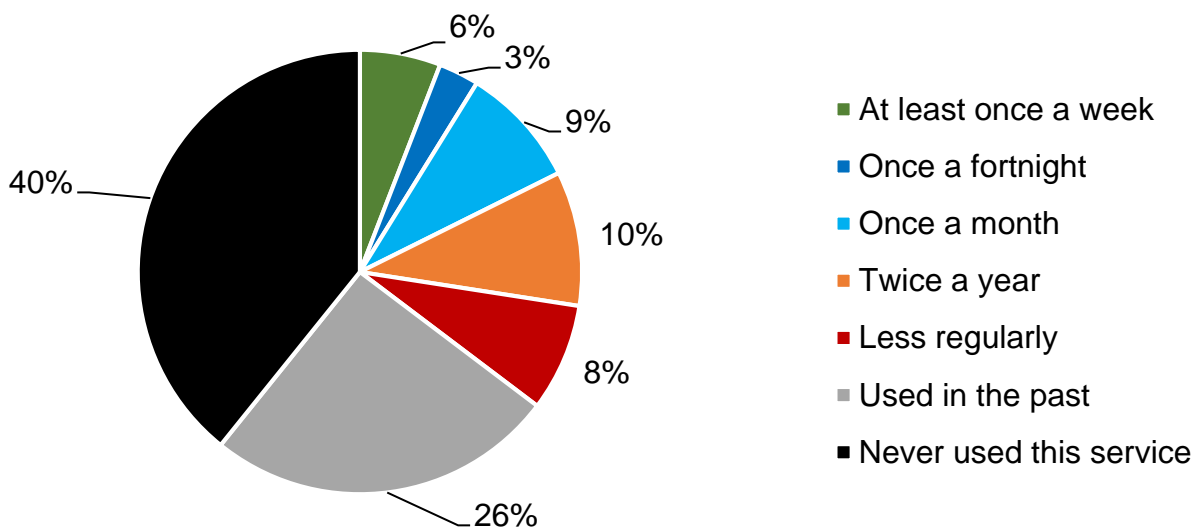


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	88	6%
Once a fortnight	43	3%
Once a month	190	13%
Twice a year	154	11%
Less regularly	128	9%
Used in the past	474	32%
Never used this service	384	26%

- 35% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use the Health Visiting Service. 17% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (6% at least once a week, 3% once a fortnight and 9% once a month).
- 26% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used the Health Visiting Service in the past and 40% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use the Health Visiting Service...?**

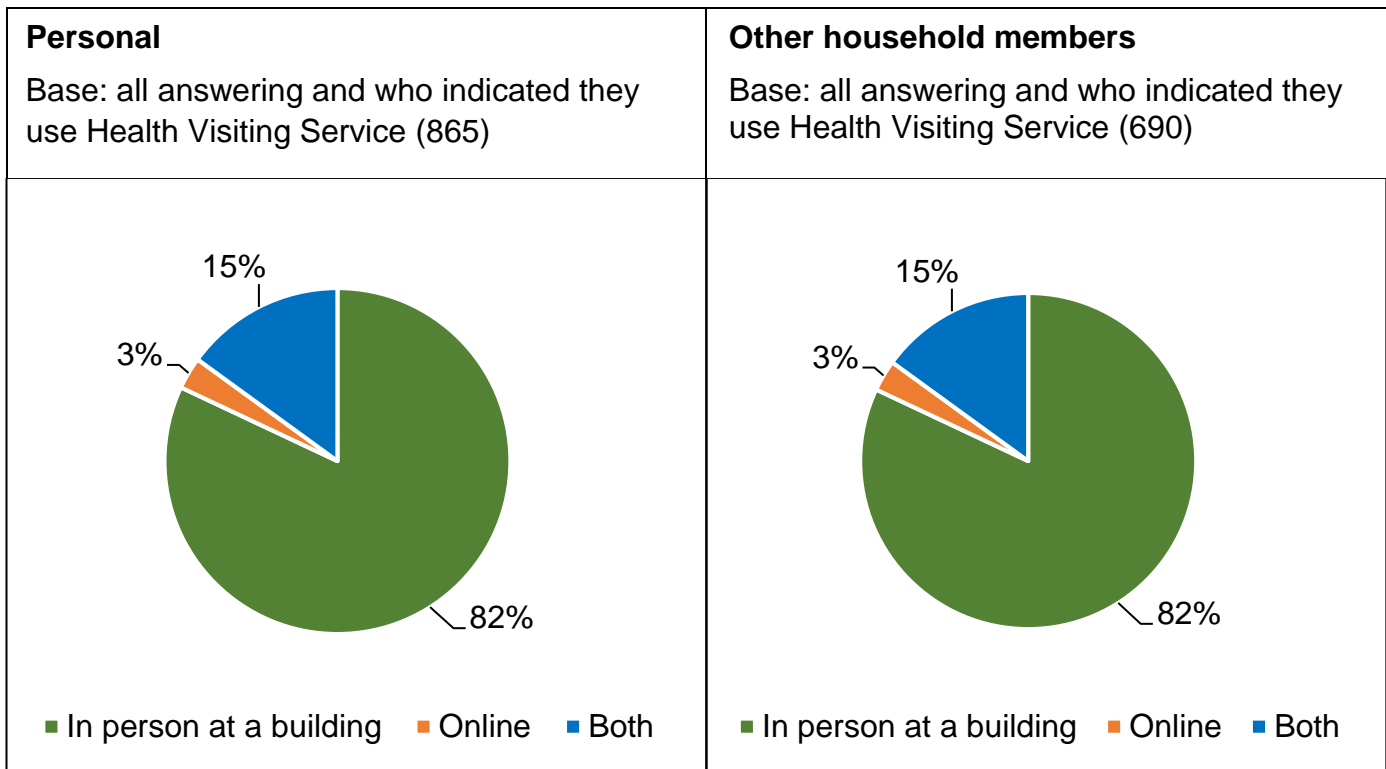
Base: all answering (1,428)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	80	6%
Once a fortnight	40	3%
Once a month	122	9%
Twice a year	136	10%
Less regularly	115	8%
Used in the past	366	26%
Never used this service	569	40%

- 82% of consultees who personally use the Health Visiting Service indicated they use them in person at a building. 3% use these services online and 15% use these services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 82% indicated they use them in person at a building. 3% use these services online and 15% use these services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use the Health Visiting Service...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	710	82%
Online	27	3%
Both	128	15%

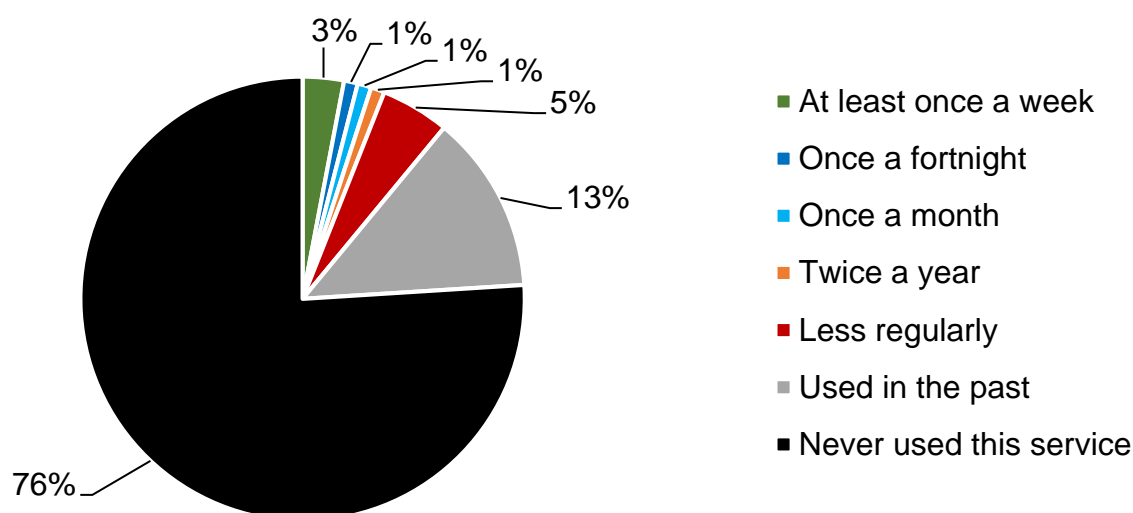
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	566	82%
Online	18	3%
Both	106	15%

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNSELLING SERVICE

- 11% of consultees answering indicated they currently use the Children and Young People's Counselling Service. 5% of consultees answering indicated they personally use the Children and Young People's Counselling Service at least once a month (3% at least once a week, 1% once a fortnight and 1% once a month).
- 13% of consultees answering indicated they have used the Children and Young People's Counselling Service in the past and 76% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use the Children and Young People's Counselling Service...?**

Base: all answering (1,409)

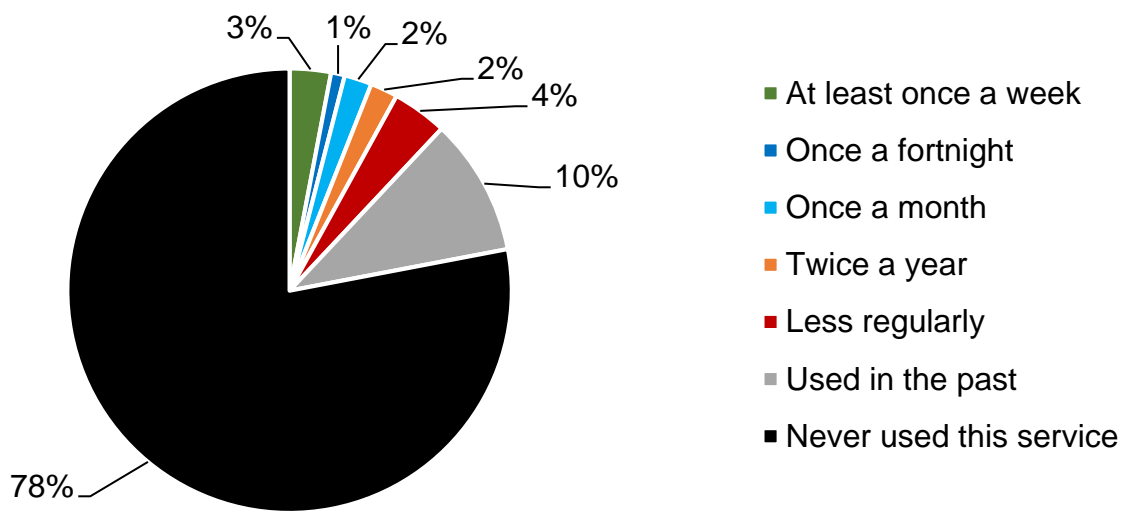


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	36	3%
Once a fortnight	15	1%
Once a month	20	1%
Twice a year	15	1%
Less regularly	73	5%
Used in the past	178	13%
Never used this service	1,072	76%

- 12% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use the Children and Young People’s Counselling Service. 6% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (3% at least once a week, 1% once a fortnight and 2% once a month).
- 10% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used the Children and Young People’s Counselling Service in the past and 78% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use the Children and Young People’s Counselling Service...?**

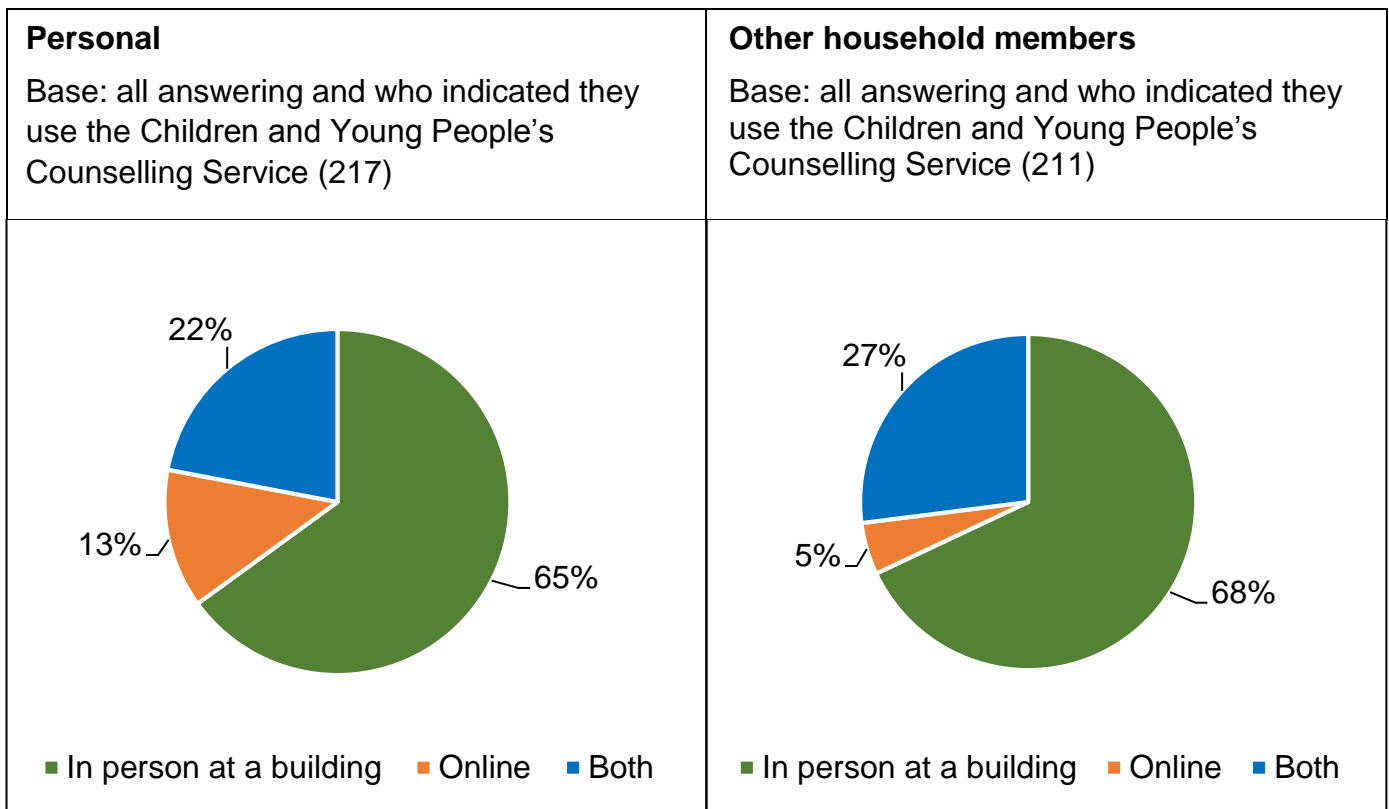
Base: all answering (1,405)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	36	3%
Once a fortnight	16	1%
Once a month	31	2%
Twice a year	23	2%
Less regularly	63	4%
Used in the past	146	10%
Never used this service	1,090	78%

- 65% of consultees who personally use the Children and Young People’s Counselling Service indicated they use them in person at a building. 13% use these services online and 22% use these services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 68% indicated they use them in person at a building. 5% use these services online and 27% use these services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use the Children and Young People’s Counselling Service ...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	140	65%
Online	29	13%
Both	48	22%

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	143	68%
Online	11	5%
Both	57	27%

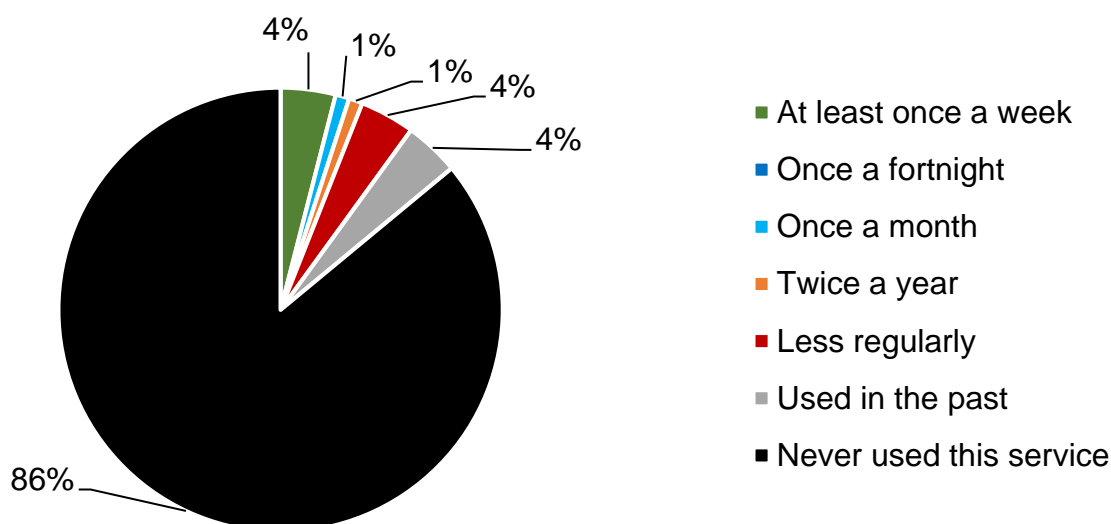


## COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- 10% of consultees answering indicated they currently use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. 5% of consultees answering indicated they personally use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities at least once a month (4% at least once a week and 1% once a month).
- 13% of consultees answering indicated they have used Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities in the past and 76% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities...?**

Base: all answering (1,425)

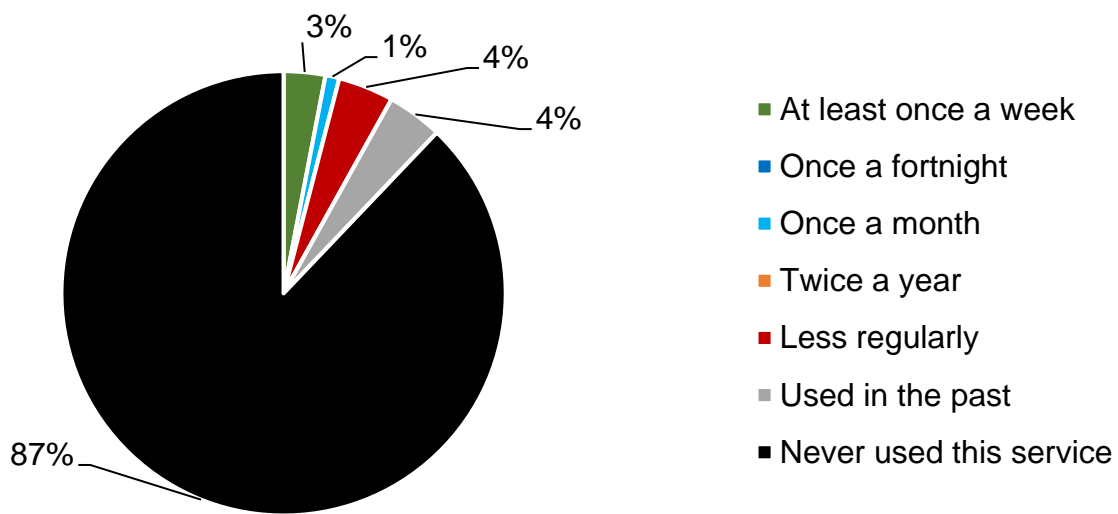


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	55	4%
Once a fortnight	5	0%
Once a month	17	1%
Twice a year	10	1%
Less regularly	61	4%
Used in the past	55	4%
Never used this service	1,222	86%

- 9% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. 5% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (3% at least once a week and 1% once a month).
- 4% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used the Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities in the past and 87% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities...?**

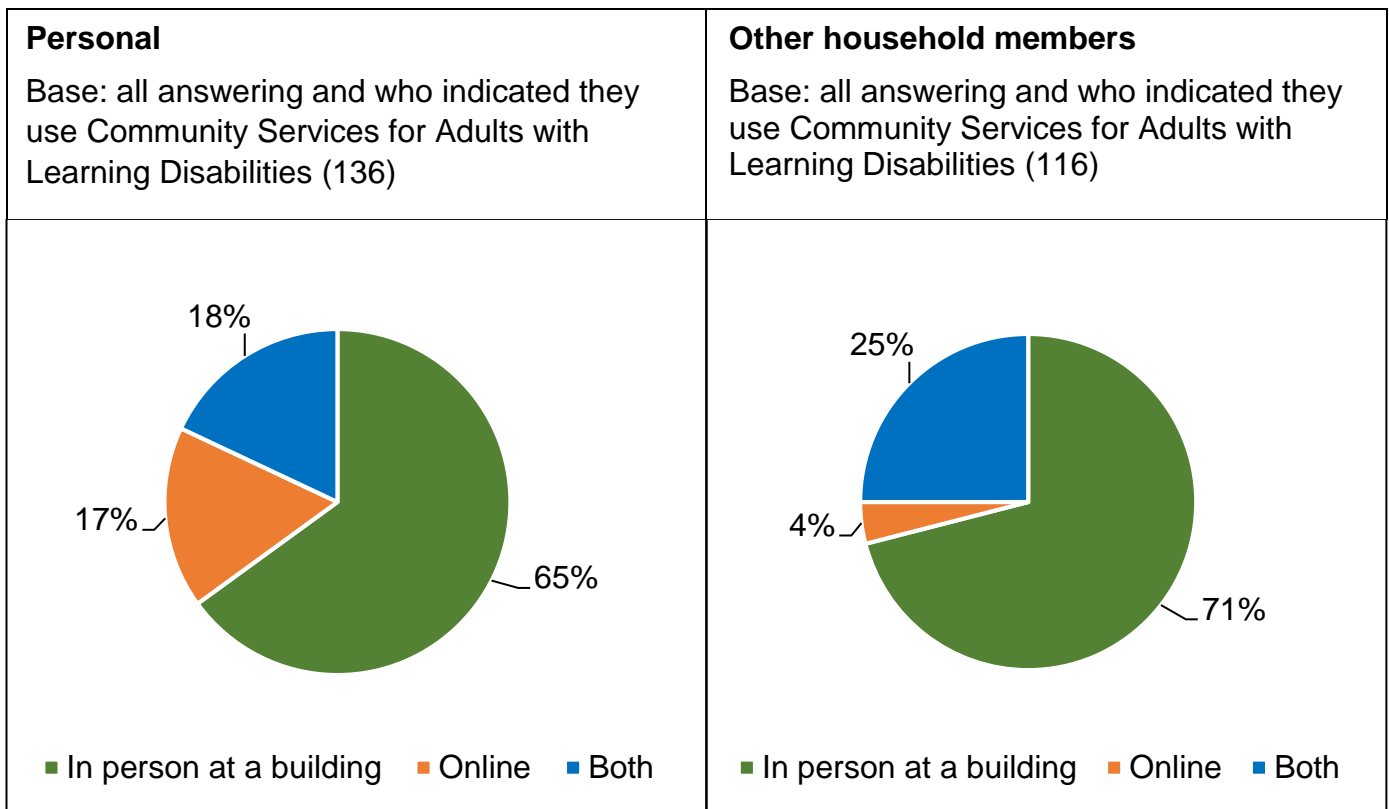
Base: all answering (1,401)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	46	3%
Once a fortnight	5	0%
Once a month	15	1%
Twice a year	6	0%
Less regularly	53	4%
Used in the past	51	4%
Never used this service	1,225	87%

- 65% of consultees who personally use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities indicated they use them in person at a building. 17% use these services online and 18% use these services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 71% indicated they use them in person at a building. 4% use these services online and 25% use these services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	89	65%
Online	23	17%
Both	24	18%

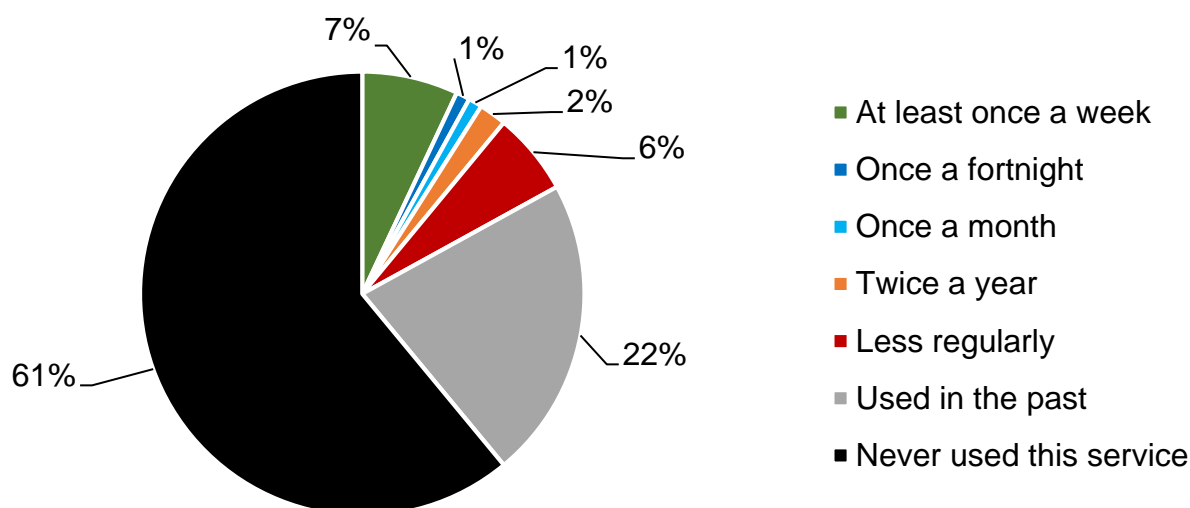
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	82	71%
Online	5	4%
Both	29	25%

## COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SKILLS - ADULT EDUCATION

- 17% of consultees answering indicated they currently use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services. 9% of consultees answering indicated they personally use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services at least once a month (7% at least once a week, 1% at least once a fortnight and 1% once a month).
- 22% of consultees answering indicated they have used Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services in the past and 61% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services...?**

Base: all answering (1,458)

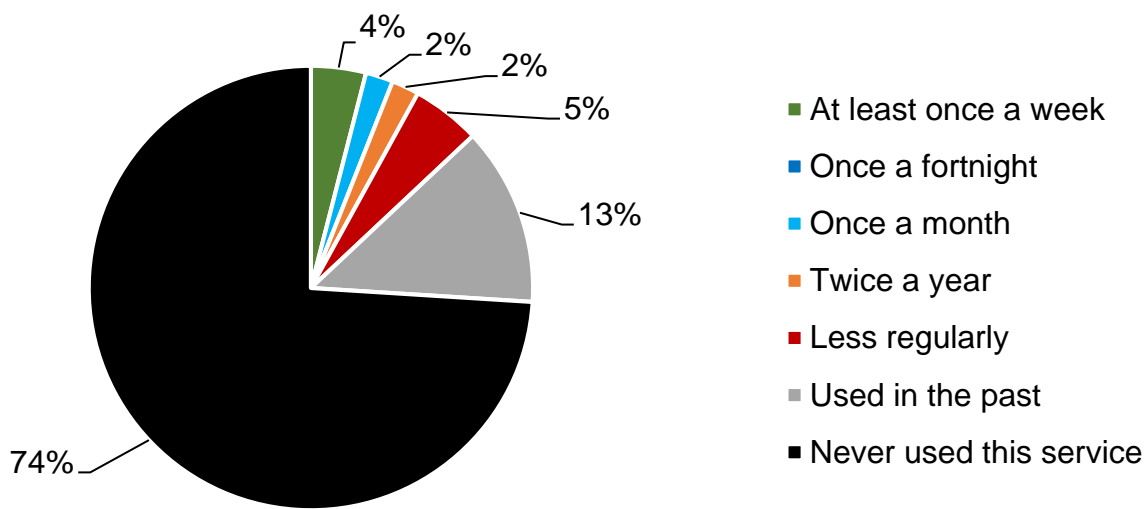


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	102	7%
Once a fortnight	12	1%
Once a month	21	1%
Twice a year	33	2%
Less regularly	82	6%
Used in the past	315	22%
Never used this service	893	61%

- 13% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services. 6% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (4% at least once a week and 2% once a month).
- 13% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used the Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services in the past and 74% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services...?**

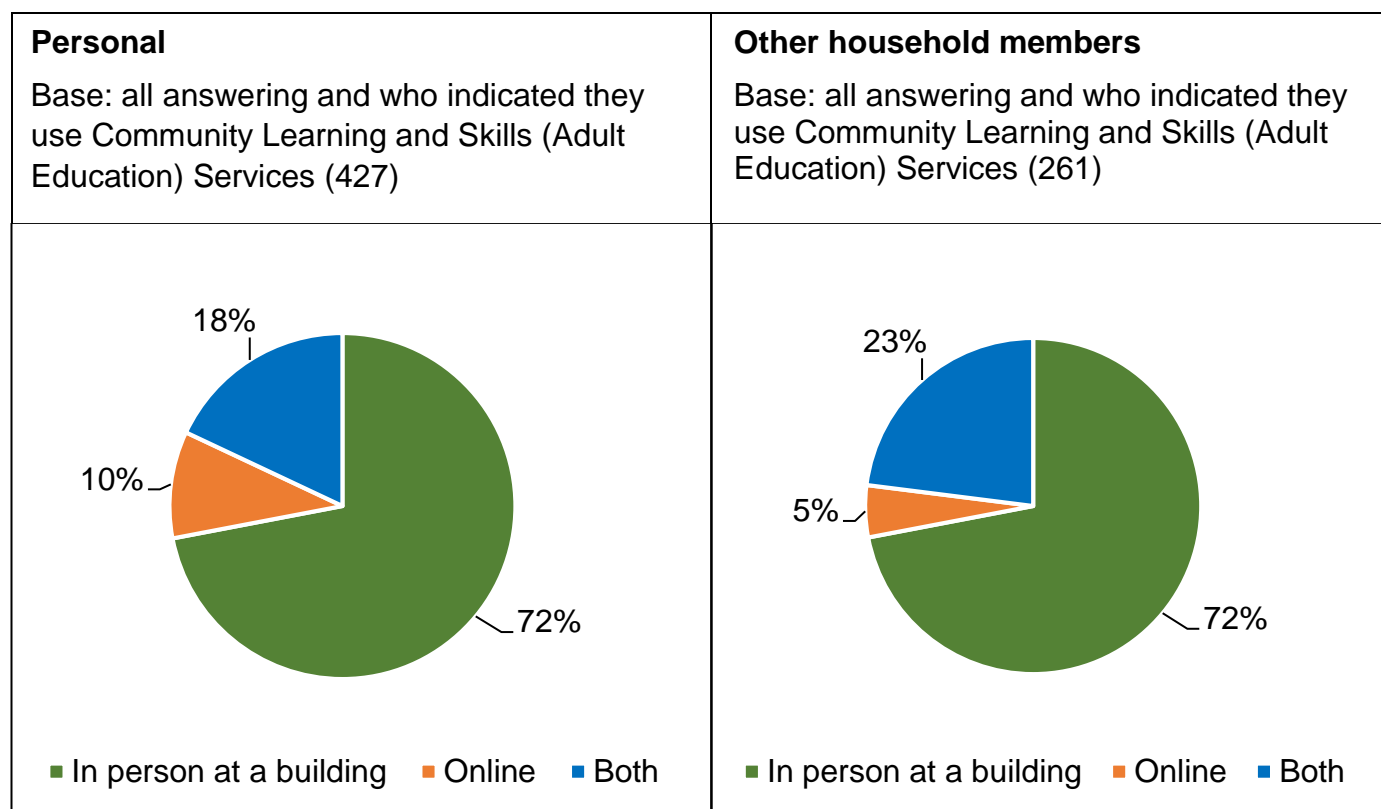
Base: all answering (1,414)



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	51	4%
Once a fortnight	7	0%
Once a month	24	2%
Twice a year	30	2%
Less regularly	65	5%
Used in the past	187	13%
Never used this service	1,050	74%

- 72% of consultees who personally use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services indicated they use them in person at a building. 10% use these services online and 18% use these services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 72% indicated they use them in person at a building. 5% use these services online and 23% use these services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services ...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	309	72%
Online	41	10%
Both	77	18%

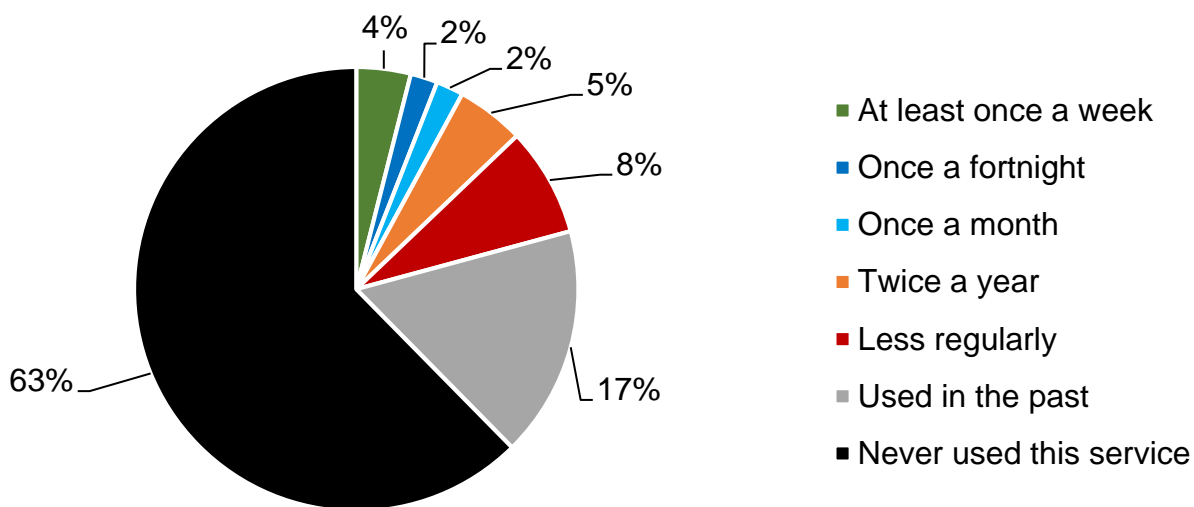
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	189	72%
Online	12	5%
Both	60	23%

## GATEWAYS

- 20% of consultees answering indicated they currently use Gateways. 8% of consultees answering indicated they personally use Gateways at least once a month (4% at least once a week, 2% at least once a fortnight and 2% once a month).
- 17% of consultees answering indicated they have used Gateways in the past and 63% indicated they have never used them.

### **Frequency of use - personal - Please tell us how often you use Gateways...?**

Base: all answering (1,437)

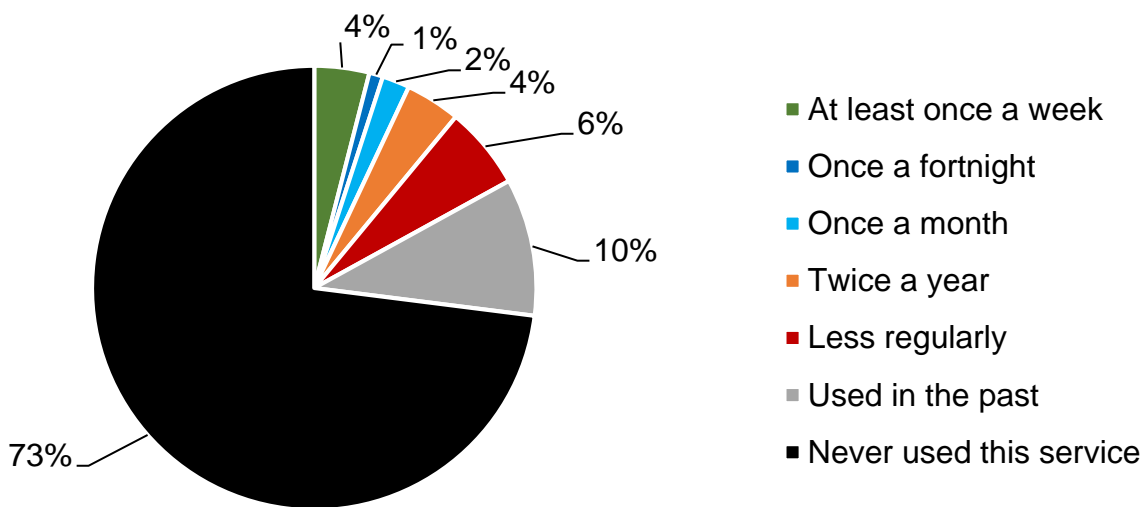


<b>SUPPORTING DATA TABLE</b>	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	57	4%
Once a fortnight	24	2%
Once a month	30	2%
Twice a year	71	5%
Less regularly	108	8%
Used in the past	243	17%
Never used this service	904	63%

- 17% of consultees answering indicated other household members currently use Gateways. 7% of consultees answering indicated use is at least once a month (4% at least once a week, 1% once a fortnight and 2% once a month).
- 13% of consultees answering indicated other household members have used the Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) Services in the past and 74% indicated other household members have never used them.

**Frequency of use - other members of household - Please tell us how often other people in your household use Gateways...?**

Base: all answering (1,399)

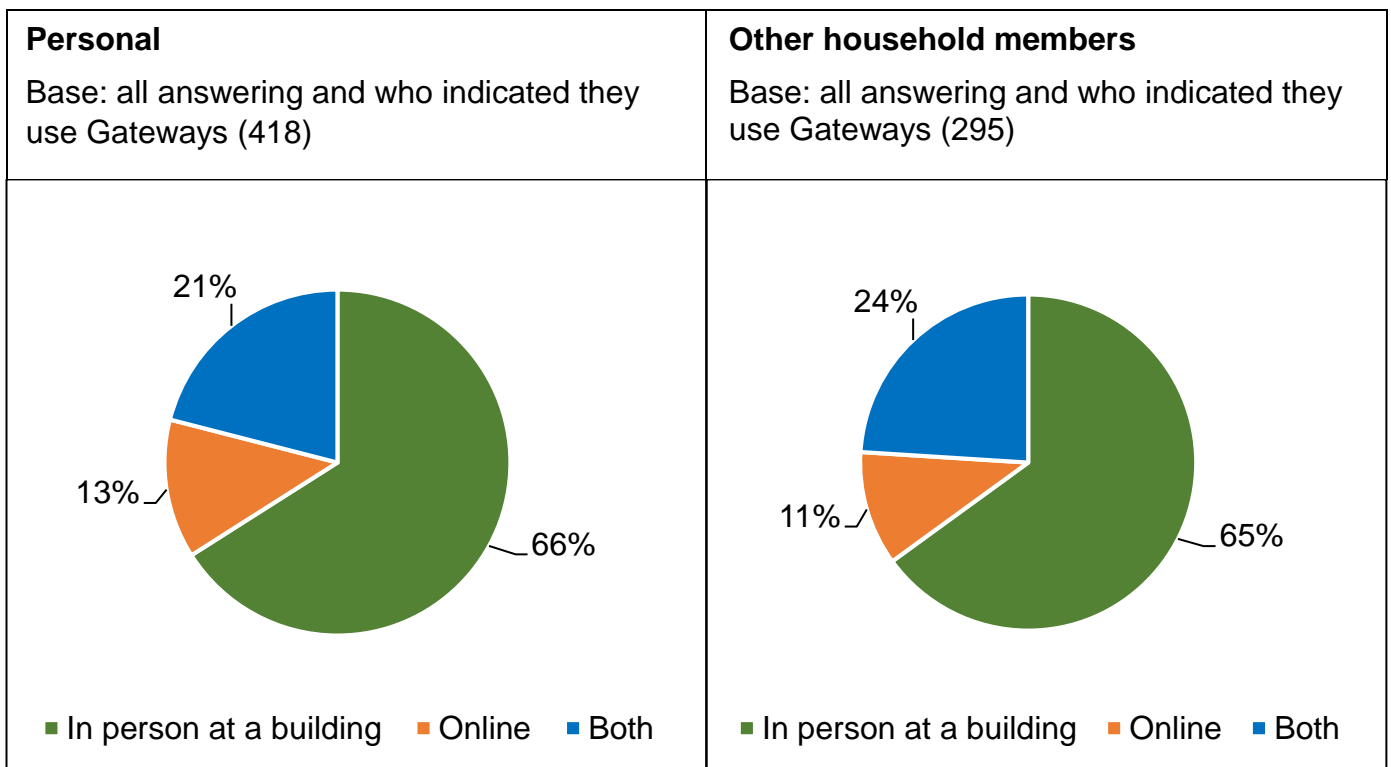


SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
At least once a week	49	4%
Once a fortnight	16	1%
Once a month	29	2%
Twice a year	50	4%
Less regularly	89	6%
Used in the past	139	10%
Never used this service	1,027	73%



- 66% of consultees who personally use Gateways indicated they use them in person at a building. 13% use Gateway services online and 21% use Gateway services in person at a building and online.
- Amongst other members of the household, 65% indicated they use them in person at a building. 11% use Gateway services online and 24% use Gateway services in person at a building and online.

**Type of use - Please tell us how you use Gateways...?**



PERSONAL - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	277	66%
Online	53	13%
Both	88	21%

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS - SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
In person at a building	192	65%
Online	33	11%
Both	70	24%

## RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS ON HOW TO DELIVER SERVICES

This section of the report summarises feedback from consultees with regards to the proposals put forward to deliver services.

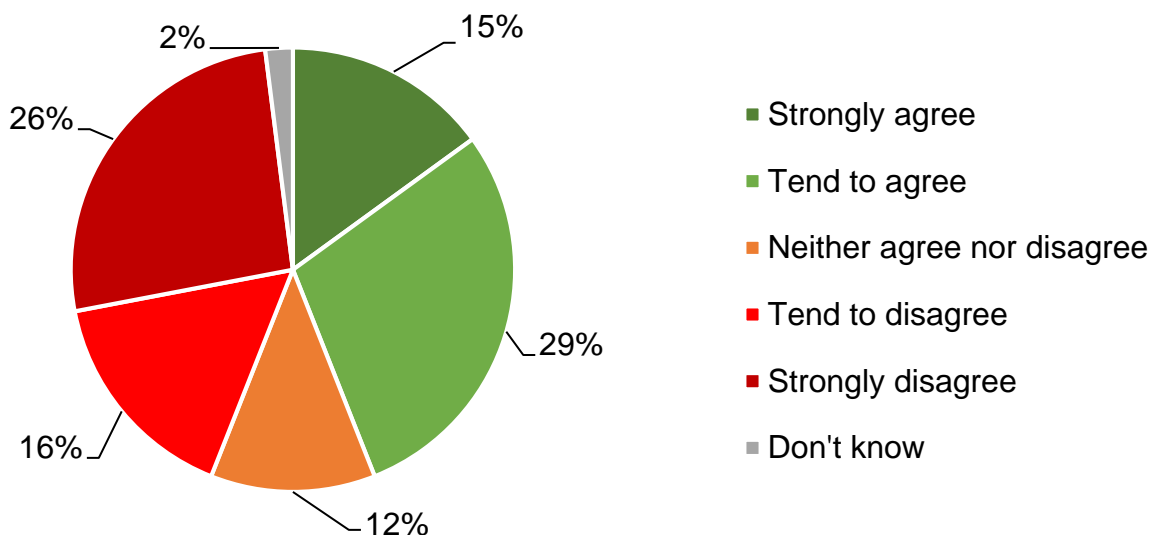
### DESIGNING PROPOSALS WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THE HIGHEST SERVICE NEED

- Views are polarising with 44% of all consultees answering indicated they agree with designing the proposals by looking at where people have the highest need for services (15% indicated they strongly agree).
- 42% of all consultees answering indicated they disagree with this approach (26% indicated they strongly disagree). 12% neither agree nor disagree.

**We have designed the proposals by looking at where people have the highest need for our services. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach...?**

Base: all answering (1,589)

AGREEMENT OVERVIEW	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net: Agree	702	44%
Net: Disagree	665	42%



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Strongly agree	240	15%
Tend to agree	462	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	185	12%
Tend to disagree	253	16%
Strongly disagree	412	26%

Don't know	37	2%
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There are significant differences in agreement with the approach taken by demographic:

- A higher proportion of female residents disagree with the approach (44%) compared to male residents (21%).
- Agreement with the approach taken increases with age with 28% of residents aged 25-34 agreeing with the approach and 66% of residents aged 65 & over agreeing.
- A higher proportion of residents who have children or are expecting children disagree with the approach (47%) compared to residents who do not have children (16%).
- 48% of resident consultees who use at least one of the prompted consultation services disagree with the approach. 31% of those who do not currently use these services disagree.

**We have designed the proposals by looking at where people have the highest need for our services. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach...?**

<b>AGREEMENT OVERVIEW - BY DEMOGRAPHIC (number of consultees answering reported in brackets)</b>	<b>Net Agree %</b>	<b>Net Disagree %</b>
Male resident (160)	65%	21%
Female resident (756)	44%	44%
Resident aged 25-34 (217)	28%	60%
Resident aged 35-49 (300)	47%	42%
Resident aged 50-64 (210)	56%	29%
Resident aged 65 & over (152)	66%	22%
Resident who have children / expecting children (659)	41%	47%
Resident who do not have children (171)	71%	16%
Resident with children aged 0-1 years old (251)	32%	55%
Resident with children aged 2-5 years old (243)	30%	56%
Resident with children aged 6-10 years old (142)	39%	48%
Resident with children aged 11-19 years old (161)	48%	40%
At least weekly user of one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (624)	35%	50%
Currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (1,030)	38%	48%
Do not currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (559)	55%	31%

Out of the 14 consultees completing the Easy Read version of the consultation questionnaire, 7 indicated they agreed with the approach and 5 disagreed. 2 indicated they were uncertain.

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There are differences in agreement with the approach taken by organisation type:

- Of the 14 Parish/Town/Borough/District Councils who completed the consultation questionnaire in an official capacity, 11 indicated they agree with designing the proposals by looking at where people have the highest need for services. 2 disagree.
- Of the 28 Parish/Town/Borough/District/County councillors who completed the consultation questionnaire, 14 indicated they agree with the approach. 8 disagree.
- Of the 31 educational establishments who completed the consultation questionnaire, 13 indicated they agree with the approach. 15 disagree.
- Of the 31 charity, voluntary or community sector organisations who completed the consultation questionnaire, 14 indicated they agree with the approach. 14 disagree.

## MISSING DATA IN UNDERSTANDING WHERE SERVICE NEED IS HIGHEST

Consultees were also given the opportunity to comment in their words on any data they believe has been missed out but should be used to understand where need for services is highest across Kent. 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. 35% of consultees answering via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment at this question.

- The most common feedback put forward by consultees is to review data on children's centre usage / understand the importance of the children's centres to those currently using (33% of consultees commenting), the availability and cost of public transport and the potential impact on non-car users (26%), consider the impact of proposals on the mental health of users / outcomes for those no longer able to access services (23%).
- 21% commented on whether users will be able to get to alternative service provision as they can't walk to those outlined and need to access services closer to home.

**We have used a lot of data and information to help understand where need for our services is highest across Kent. This is shown in the consultation document. If you think we have missed out any data that should be used, please tell us what it is.**

Base: all answering (613)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Data on children's centre usage / importance of children's centres needs to be understood	204	33%
Availability and cost of public transport / impact on non-car users	162	26%
Consider the impact on mental health of users / outcomes for those who won't be able to access the service(s)	138	23%
Users being able to get there / travel there / can't walk to alternatives / need close location of services	127	21%
Data on everyone / not just deprived areas / everyone can be in need / someone will always miss out	114	19%
Survey the users / your data doesn't tell the full story	68	11%
Object to the closures / changes / venues / services	68	11%
Planning for the future / future needs / increase in housing will mean increase in demand	64	10%
Suitability of space / building / is it fit for purpose	26	4%
Data is out of date / affected by covid / not from pre-pandemic levels	22	4%
Midwifery services data	22	4%
Data on climate impact / sustainability of buildings / carbon emissions / net zero	11	2%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Times of sessions / groups	4	1%
Comments related to cost impacts / cutbacks / spend	18	3%
Something else	19	3%

Some example verbatims from the key themes of usage and transport can be found below:

**“Any data showing how much use the existing services and locations are used, in particular whether residents from the high need wards have accessed.”**

**“Have you looked at what percentage of the community use these services? Which centres were slowest to reintroduce services post-pandemic, which may affect current use levels? What other services are available in the local area - e.g. smaller communities will be worst affected because there are fewer alternative services available in the area.”**

**“I think you should talk face to face to the people that use it and understand their journeys and experiences rather than relying on statistics that don't tell the full story and can be misrepresented and miss key points.”**

**“You haven’t collected data showing the true picture because you are missing and failing those who need services since you stripped them back due to Covid. You don’t know who needs what and where because you haven’t been offering anything actually needed.”**

**“Your data is probably erroneous and probably don’t give a true idea of how many people use these services. Since Covid the services across the children centre therefore automatically less people will use and there are less services available close to home. These children are really good to help parents especially when they have questions about baby newborn and young kids and can help reduce people queuing to the GP (which is a shamble in itself) and other health services. Therefore less pressure on the NHS nationally and also combat depression & other future issues etc.. where mums go and meet other mums m, learn best practices, share ideas & concerns help babies socialise & communicate which is key in development.”**

**“The Beaches Children Centre is placed at the eastern side of the Isle of Sheppey which is surrounded by 15 of 16 holiday parks. Beaches Children’s Centre is located in an area of isolation for many people due to; lack of footpaths, an unreliable bus service, and shops that shut for two months of the year due to losing its custom when the holiday parks close. If Beaches closed and a family from the Leysdown area would like to attend a toddler session at a Children’s Centre, they would have to get the bus to either Sheerness or two buses or a bus and a train to Queenborough to the proposed Queenborough library. It would take a family 41 minutes from Leysdown via bus to sheerness to get to Seashells. It would take a family to get from Leysdown to the Queenborough Library, between 1hr 10 minutes and 1hr 27 minutes. The challenges families may face when travelling with their family from Leysdown/Warden to Sheerness or Queenborough are as follows - Public transport not turning up on time and missing the session, the cost public transport, no**

public footpaths so no option to walk and the group being fully booked and being turned away even after travelling for long period.”

“Concern has been raised over the failure to include metrics on how services are used and how the service users and staff are likely to access the proposed facilities. The indicators used to form the analysis are descriptive of the service user, but do not explain how they’re likely to behave, which in turn may impact the effectiveness of the needs-based angle that KCC is taking. An example of this would be the inclusion of “public transport connectivity”; connectivity doesn’t necessarily mean that users will use public transport when travelling to a location, regardless of its proximity, especially given the cost of public transport, the recent cuts to bus routes and potential future cuts, and preferences towards private car use. Team members also expressed concern over the failure to include carbon reduction as one of the indicators that formed part of the community needs analysis, as whilst this is included as a potential metric for determining which buildings to close, it is not considered to be a community need, even though it could be argued that it is.”

“Car ownership and access to public transport. Individuals and families who require support may not own a car or have access to a car at all times of the day. Many work or have caring responsibility for children, parents and therefore time limited. In 2021 22% of households did not have a car. [www.gov.uk/government](http://www.gov.uk/government) National Travel Survey. Does the data collect also consider the % of households without access to a car being greater or less in the areas of greatest need? Did the data take into account accessibility of public transport in the areas of greatest need to new centres? ( journey times) Did the data look at the cost of transport and would the increased cost impede essential use of the service? Did the data look at the cost of transport and would the increased cost impede essential use? Did the data compare the age of people who access a service? What is the impact on the young, less able and elderly?”

“We believe that this was a really difficult task, but perhaps the analysis is lacking some local knowledge about the challenges faced by communities with public transport links and about the directions in which families travel to access services. In some cases it seems that decisions were based on population density, but not always in the same way (keeping rural centres and asking large populations to travel there OR keeping town centres and excluding those living in rural areas). It also seems that travelling across District lines hasn’t always been considered as an option. In some cases typical public health data can lead to services being funded in areas of high deprivation, when actually the need for those services may be needed by more people in areas of lower deprivation (breastfeeding support after birth as an example).”

“Information on travel time to receive healthcare (health visiting/ maternity services) and poorer health outcomes. Impact of moving services online which have commonly been face to face until the COVID19 pandemic. Research which shows improved outcomes for mothers using children’s centres such as better mental health, Improved early education in the home and reduced parent child dysfunction interaction. The effect of increasing levels of deprivation and child poverty on outcomes for mothers and children. Travel info mentions outgoing but not return journeys and does not take into account issues with using buggies etc on public transport. The increased risk of online or virtual appointments in women being able to disclose domestic abuse and other crimes. Information concerning the cost of poorer health outcomes for women and children due to closures.”

Some example verbatims from the perspective of impacting the mental health of users / outcomes for those who won't be able to access the service can be found below:

**“Number of people accessing services does not perhaps give the whole picture. Those accessing, do they have financial resources to travel to other locations, do they rely on those services for mental health/warmth/comfort/social/support generally. What is the impact of removing those contact points? This is not an issue that can be fully assessed with data on activity and perceived local deprivation.”**

**“You cannot deprive less populated areas as transport is expensive. This will help mother's mental health as well as children's wellbeing. Deprive because there are less people will only put more strained in their mental state.”**

**“You have not looked at mental health. As someone who suffered from post-natal depression, Blossom's children centre was invaluable to just 'pop along to' when I was having a bad day. You are proposing for our closest centre to be 8 miles away, which if you can't drive is a 25 minute bus ride. This would not help someone with mental health issues.”**

**“There are still many families in high need of our services, they cannot afford to travel or are too anxious to travel to what would be their next nearest centre. I have mothers with serious mental health struggles who only just make it out of their house to walk 10 minutes to their nearest centre in Tenterden. They would never get on a bus or taxi/car to travel to another centre. Closing the only two rural centres in Ashford and leaving all three centres in the town is a badly made decision as you are missing out on so many families by doing this. Closing one centre in Ashford would've made sense.”**

Some also commented on data not considering potential increases in population or closures / reductions in children centre services affecting the data used to base proposals:

**“The significant rise in of new builds that are now occupied in Faversham area. When you looked at your data there were very few residents as the properties had not been finished. Now along with social housing the significant number of residents has potential to influence your service requirements and building purposes..”**

**“The Ray Allen Centre located on Stanhope Road, Ashford, TN23 has been closed for around 5 years. When it was open it was a much used and valued centre. You will not have any relevant data as it has been closed due to lock-down and then proposed development that is occurring in the area.”**

Specific verbatim feedback from Parish / Town / Borough / District Councils in an official capacity and Parish / Town / District / County Councillors can be found below:

**“5 of the 8 children's centres are proposed to be cut in Dartford. This area has a steadily expanding population and a young demographic, as people raising families are attracted to**



**the rail links to London and very good schools in this area. We need to see an increase rather than decrease in services for children and families.”**

**“Upcoming developments in Northern Sevenoaks where population will increase significantly if they are approved by the Local Planning Authority. Also landscape and topography needs to be considered regarding accessibility. Relocating a service in town where public will have to walk up a hill or use bus services to access it is not going to increase the amount of people that can use it, but rather decrease it.”**

**“Availability of public transport and timings to get to and from the new location of the services. Recently published census data.”**

**“The public transport data is out of date. The information in the consultation suggests travel times to proposed buildings but this must be looked at again. The data does not look at the regularity of busses, I included travel times to all KCC building instead of looking at the buildings and sufficiency in more detail. The information does not include estimates refurbishment costs. This is a cost saving exercise and it would be self-defeating if the cost to refurbish the proposed building are not included. There is no information regarding the proposed increase in car usage. There is no equalities assessment regarding the proposals.”**

**“We believe that there is something missing with regards to the decisions made around the closure of the two children's centres (Dymchurch Children's Centre and Lydd Children's Centre). This has not considered the transport issues or associated costs in accessing the remaining alternative provision. This area is very rurally isolated, coupled with high levels of deprivation, means that the alternative provision is out of reach for the majority of users. We would like to KCC to reconsider this proposal and work with us on either retaining the provision as is, or to look to suitable premises for alternative delivery. Buildings such as libraries, where the general members of the public frequent, are not suitable buildings to incorporate services designed for babies and very young children. It would be useful to get a better understanding of the transport link data that has been used, and also whether Free School Meals is included in any of the data sets. Is adult data excluded where children's services are being looked at? Has there been an assessment of other buildings that children's services (co-located services) could be operated from, e.g. schools or community centres/village halls? If so, what reinvestment back in terms of funding is being considered for this?”**

**“It is noted that a public transport catchment area methodology has been used which relies on a database which is updated on a quarterly basis. The data used for the consultation is based on a snapshot in time. Bus services are known to frequently change and/or are subject to being reduced or cancelled (and would be difficult to bring back once they are lost), and it is therefore not known going forward how reliable these transport services will be. Such changes could have serious implications for some users in reaching service destinations. Some journeys may also not be direct and involve a change enroute to a service building and may not run at suitable frequency or times of the day, also to the detriment of service users. Therefore if the above methodology is used, a suitable review mechanism should be built in. The consultation suggests travel times of 30 minutes on public transport. It takes no account of other users; i.e. bus companies' restrictions on the number of pushchairs on each bus (maximum two or none if a wheelchair user is already aboard). Where alternative services are shown to be located within 10 minutes walking distance, it is not apparent that the issue of topography has been considered. Tunbridge Wells is well known for its undulating topography, and this may make walking (or indeed**

cycling which is not mentioned as a form of transport in the consultation documents) difficult for some service users. In addition, given that the proposals have been designed looking at where service users have the highest need, it is important that the level of need is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis given that service needs and circumstances for a particular ward or area may change over time.”

“Children in poverty data. Data doesn’t always define exactly what is happening within communities due to transient communities and those who do not interact officially with services and therefore you should be mindful that there are communities in Swale that you may not have captured through this process.”

“The ability of many households to travel to proposed alternative venues will be challenging. Many vulnerable households will face longer and more costly travel with likelihood of this reducing their ability or willingness to engage with services and activities. In some areas of the borough bus services only run only at peak times reducing opportunities to travel at other times of the day and on occasions buses may be unable to stop to pick up passengers if already full.”

“Journey times on buses or trains cost money, vulnerable families have limited finances. Bus timetables have been significantly reduced because of KCC cuts, therefore limiting the access these families need to reach towards support. Train journeys to Maidstone, give no direct access to Shepway Childrens Centre, a bus journey would be needed following a long walk from Maidstone East to the bus station depot. At the entry point of the train, there are no accessible points for buggies or pushchairs. Only the Shepway Children’s Centre has very limited accessibility by road, rail or bus, not Cranbrook Library – just check the bus and train timetables. Shepway Children’s Centre as outlined above is not readily accessible within a 30 minute public transport catchment. Basic bus timetables have NOT been consulted before making these broad inaccurate statements that 96% of residents can travel from the closed centre to the replacement. As KCC we have a statutory function to meet the needs of vulnerable families. Forcing families to rely on public transport when they will have a significant journey time and a cost which they can’t afford. In reality the most certain outcome will be that these journey’s will not be made. The practical outcome will be that these families will not seek support for themselves and the vulnerable children will be lost to the system, until they reach school. Then KCCs problems begin. The children’s needs will be identified late, as a result, an increasing percentage of educational, behavioural and medical need, will place more strain on all of the services. As well as increasing the number of EHCP plans, adding to our budgetary challenges.”

“Kent County Council have made a very clear statement as part of this consultation. It says, “our proposals have been designed by considering where there is greatest need for our services.” However, the reasons for the proposed changes appear to be primarily about property rather than need. The consultation document talks about the needs of residents in each individual ward in Maidstone. The consultation document recognises that there are more deprived wards than others but fails to recognise the impact of the proposals on those wards. The needs-based assessment that accompanies the consultations identifies High Street Ward and Shepway (North) as two of Maidstone’s most deprived wards. It is proposed that two children’s Centres will close in Maidstone - in East Ward and Marden and Yalding Ward as well as the relocation of Adult Education from High Street Ward to Heath Ward. In assessing ‘need’ we are not confident that this has been considered as comprehensively as we would have expected for a number of reasons.”

## PROPOSALS TO CO-LOCATE SERVICES

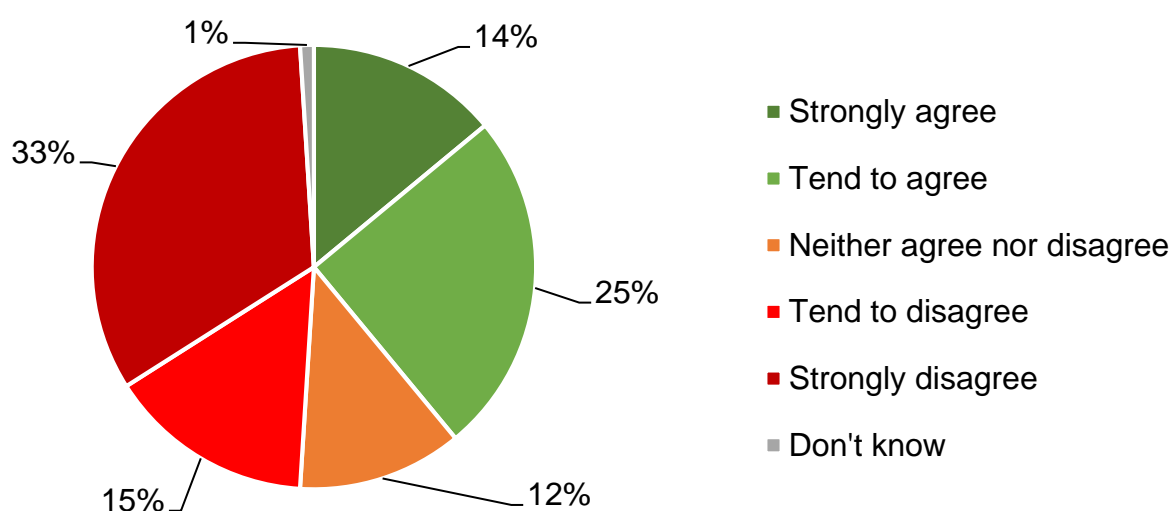
- Views are polarising with 39% of all consultees answering indicating they agree with the proposal to co-locate some services as explained in the consultation document (14% indicated they strongly agree).
- 48% of all consultees answering indicating they disagree with this approach (33% indicated they strongly disagree). 12% neither agree nor disagree.

**We propose to co-locate services from more of our buildings. This means people will be able to access more than one KCC service from some of our buildings. Proposed co-locations are shown in the consultation document.**

**How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to co-locate some of our services, as explained in the consultation document...?**

Base: all answering (1,583)

AGREEMENT OVERVIEW	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net: Agree	611	39%
Net: Disagree	764	48%



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Strongly agree	215	14%
Tend to agree	396	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	191	12%
Tend to disagree	240	15%
Strongly disagree	524	33%
Don't know	17	1%

There are significant differences in agreement with the proposal to co-locate some services by demographic:

- A higher proportion of female residents disagree with the proposal (49%) compared to male residents (26%).
- Agreement with the proposal increases with age with 22% of residents aged 25-34 agreeing with the proposal and 68% of residents aged 65 & over agreeing.
- A higher proportion of residents who have children or are expecting children disagree with the proposal (52%) compared to residents who do not have children (22%).
- 54% of resident consultees who use at least one of the prompted consultation services disagree with the proposal. Whilst comparably lower, it should be noted that 37% of those who do not currently use these services also disagree with the proposal.

**How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to co-locate some of our services, as explained in the consultation document...?**

<b>AGREEMENT OVERVIEW - BY DEMOGRAPHIC (number of consultees answering reported in brackets)</b>	<b>Net Agree %</b>	<b>Net Disagree %</b>
Male resident (160)	61%	26%
Female resident (749)	38%	49%
Resident aged 25-34 (217)	22%	63%
Resident aged 35-49 (299)	33%	52%
Resident aged 50-64 (205)	55%	31%
Resident aged 65 & over (151)	68%	25%
Resident with children / expecting children (653)	34%	52%
Resident with no children (173)	68%	22%
Resident with children aged 0-1 years old (250)	22%	61%
Resident with children aged 2-5 years old (243)	19%	68%
Resident with children aged 6-10 years old (142)	35%	54%
Resident with children aged 11-19 years old (160)	51%	38%
At least weekly user of one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (624)	25%	58%
Currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (1,028)	32%	54%
Do not currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (555)	51%	37%

Out of the 13 consultees completing the Easy Read version of the consultation questionnaire, 4 indicated they thought co-location was a good idea and 4 disagreed. 5 indicated they were uncertain.

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There are differences in agreement with the proposal to co-locate some services by organisation type:

- Of the 16 Parish/Town/Borough/District Councils who completed the consultation questionnaire in an official capacity, 8 indicated they agree with the proposal to co-locate some services. 6 disagree.
- Of the 28 Parish/Town/Borough/District/County councillors who completed the consultation questionnaire, 11 indicated they agree with the proposal. 12 disagree.
- Of the 31 educational establishments who completed the consultation questionnaire, 9 indicated they agree with the proposal. 18 disagree.
- Of the 31 charity, voluntary or community sector organisations who completed the consultation questionnaire, 13 indicated they agree with the proposal. 17 disagree.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CO-LOCATING SERVICES

Consultees were also given the opportunity to comment in their words on what they believe to be important when considering co-locating services. 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. 77% of consultees responding via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment at this question.

- The most common feedback put forward by consultees is whether users will be able to get to alternative service provision as they can't walk to those outlined and need to access services closer to home (51% of consultees commenting).
- This is followed by the availability / cost of public transport and recent service reductions (33%) and the practicality of co-located services (22%) and the suitability of proposed buildings / setups (19%).
- 21% commented on the need to consider the impact of proposals on the mental health of users / vulnerable / for those no longer able to access services.

### What do you think is important for us to consider when co-locating services...?

Base: all answering (1,347)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Users being able to get there / travel there / can't walk to alternatives / need close location of services	684	51%
Public transport availability / cost of / reduction in service	449	33%
Practicality of co-located services (e.g. children's centre in same space as library)	295	22%
Impact on users unable to access the service / impact on vulnerable / mental health / taking away a lifeline / hub of community	280	21%
Suitability of building / fit for purpose / the space	258	19%
Maintaining service levels / impact on service levels	189	14%
Parking	118	9%
Comments referencing objections to closures	93	7%
Demand for the services / including potential future demand	66	5%
Timing of sessions / groups	48	4%
Potential cost implications of co-location / concern about cutbacks	44	3%
Impact on / concern for staff (e.g., having to travel about more / accessibility concerns / how staff will manage co-location)	41	3%
Commented that it's a good idea	31	2%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net zero pollution will pass on to end users / more people travelling	24	2%
Maximise use of KCC buildings / existing buildings where possible	15	1%
Ensure people know where to go / communicate changes / locations	15	1%
Outdoor space provision	9	1%
Other	26	2%

Some example verbatims from the key themes of users being able to get to alternatives / needing close location of services and public transport concerns can be found below:

**“Additional services that run from the centres, including EKHUFT maternity services which are already extremely busy. Travel needs of those closest to the centres marked for closure - often seeking support at the most vulnerable times so travelling can be a block to accessing that.”**

**“The key point must be the infrastructure for people to access the services. Many disadvantaged people or suffering mental health issues, really don't need to added stress of having to pay and use public transport. There could be a possibility of "service pop ups" on stated day of the week for offering drop in service in the manner of MP Surgeries. This mobile service would then be offering a far reaching approach to all residents of Kent.”**

**“Transport. Many people who access your services may not have access to a car or drive. It would isolate people if transport wasn't good. A new mum wanting to access a health visitor or breastfeeding support may have had a C-section or traumatic birth and if the chosen location is a distance from their home they may decide not to make the journey.”**

**“It's all about access. Merge services in a building that is not accessible would be pointless. I remember the NHS created some walk-in centres that patients could only walk-in to if they had a car to drive there in the first place. Most people who the service was aimed at did not have cars.”**

**“The proposed closures affect fifteen settings that currently operate from Children's Centres. If these settings were to close as a consequence, we would lose 648 places that could be offered at any one time to children. However, because many children attend nursery part time, the total number of children on roll at each of the nurseries could be much higher, so this presents as a significant loss. We are also concerned that where services are being co-located at other Children's Centre sites where there is existing nursery provision, that these settings could also be affected by the plans. A further thirty-three settings could be impacted with places for 1162 children at any one time, which again could be a significantly higher number of children if many are attending part time places.”**

**“Access. A lot of families where I live either have to walk or take public transport to children centres and closing these will stop some families accessing support. I really think the bigger impact on businesses as well as families is important. I have accessed midwifery**

**and Health Visiting care at children centres. Having to travel further would make attending appointments more difficult and impact on those services which are already struggling.”**

**“Ease of access, parking and transport. Closing blossoms where there is free parking on roads, good transport links, near a school is a mistake . It is not clear where children's services such as baby groups would be located, but if its dover that is not good. People join those groups to be part of their community, make new friends to go for coffee with and rely on each other through those early years it's not helpful to merge towns for that reason. Blossoms is a fantastic asset, which we all pay tax towards. The government should answer to your increase in costs, not us.”**

Some example verbatims from the key themes of the practicality of co-located services / groups and concerns regarding building / space suitability can be found below:

**“Space available to accommodate both the activities and services provided, and the staff who need somewhere to work from. Home working has proved difficult for some staff, but there is just no longer the space available for office based working. Also how the various services can actually work in the same environment. It may be difficult for adults with learning difficulties to be in the same place as noisy children and lots of people coming & going.”**

**“Less opportunity for children when existing locations are closed that have excellent facilities to be replaced by inadequate places e.g. Temple Hill library has no outdoor play area which is an essential requirement if early Yeats’s provision. Children from low income homes are less likes to have gardens and outside spaces. The proposal to move provision to the library takes this away.”**

**“Getting the balance correct for each service. Placing adult social care in a library area where each service would not benefit each other is not right. Youth centre in a library again is not a good balance. Both services benefit with space for their user and resources. Libraries are too confined, restricted and quiet which prevents the services to operate freely and enjoyable for the adults and youths using them.”**

**“Early conversations with District Councils to identify opportunities and sites for co-location is important. It is disappointing that this hasn’t taken place in advance of or as part of the development of current proposals. It is extremely worrying that the co-location of the alternative service provision for users of Marden Children’s Centre is Cranbrook Library and this is not yet confirmed.”**

**“Childrens centres are designed with children in mind with dedicated rooms a joint location may not have. Will also not have room for storage for resources used by multiple groups so would have to cut resources available to children.”**

**“Privacy and confidentiality of those using the service. If the location is multi-purpose, this greatly increases the chance that someone will be put off accessing much-needed services for fear of being seen by someone they know. This is a very, very serious concern.”**



When filtering response on consultees who use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member), feedback is broadly consistent in terms of key themes identified:

- Whether users will be able to get to alternative service provision as they can't walk to those outlined and need to access services closer to home (51% of consultees commenting).
- Availability / cost of public transport and recent service reductions (31%)
- The impact of proposals on the mental health of users / vulnerable / for those no longer able to access services (24%)
- The practicality of co-located services / groups (23%) and the suitability of proposed buildings / setups (18%).

### What do you think is important for us to consider when co-locating services...?

Base: Currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (864); responses 5% and over reported

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Users being able to get there / travel there / close location of services	444	51%
Public transport availability / cost of / reduction in service	270	31%
Practicality of co-located services / groups (e.g., children's centre in same space as library)	201	23%
Impact on users unable to access the service / impact on vulnerable / mental health / taking away a lifeline / hub of community	204	24%
Suitability of building / fit for purpose / the space	153	18%
Maintaining service levels / impact on service levels	128	15%
Parking	70	8%
Comments referencing objections to closures	69	8%
Demand for the services / including potential future demand	43	5%

## PERCEPTIONS OF DELIVERING SERVICES THROUGH OUTREACH

Consultees were also given the opportunity to provide any comments about delivering services through outreach in their 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. 46% of consultees responding via the consultation questionnaire provided a comment at this question.

- References to the concept of outreach being a good idea features in 24% of comments made. However, the majority of these comments also contain a cautionary note such as it depends on the service delivered, the service is well advertised and accessible to all to use.
- 21% of consultees answering commented that outreach services need to be accessible to potential users, via locations close to home / easily accessible by public transport.
- 17% of consultees answering commented that the type of services being considered are often used 'as they need them / without much prior planning' and in a familiar place and therefore consideration needs to be given for how outreach services are organised.
- 16% of consultees answering commented the suitability of the buildings needs to be taken into account in line with service delivery required for the services under consultation.
- 14% of consultees answering commented that the services under consultation will need to be assessed carefully to see if they are suitable for an outreach service compared to the service offered now.
- 12% of consultees answering commented that potential outreach services need to be regular and offered as a committed service so the current service offering isn't diluted and users are familiar with the services' regularity.

### **If you have any comments you would like to make about delivering services through outreach, please tell us...?**

Base: all answering (807)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Comments referencing it's a good idea (unspecified / for some services)	190	24%
Users need to be able to get there / travel there / close location (for staff and users)	172	21%
Services under consultation are used as people need them / daily / need a permanent place / familiarity	137	17%
Consider the general suitability of the building(s) used	128	16%
Services need to be assessed carefully to see if they are suitable for an outreach service / alternative offering	117	14%
Services need to be committed / regular / service not diluted	98	12%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Needs to be advertised well / users know when / where / not missing anyone	82	10%
Disagree with proposals / don't close or make changes to current service provision	61	8%
Concern about storage space for equipment / resources	56	7%
Use existing buildings / why close one to use another / costs to hire	55	7%
Perception that outreach isn't good / doesn't work	48	6%
Comments referencing a need for more outreach services	42	5%
Vulnerable users / disabled being able to get there / alternatives meeting their needs	32	4%
Belief this will result in closing down services altogether	24	3%
Comments referencing face to face access is best	13	2%
Other	28	3%

Some example verbatims from referring to the outreach concept as being a good idea can be found below:

**“The idea is perfect. Your examples of execution are poor. This ends up in lists and huge wait times and the most needy losing support.”**

**“Very common practice for decades in rural areas. Improve performance, make more use of public buildings during normally closed hours such as libraries and schools. Consider availability of churches and similar faith properties.”**

**“Outreach is great and we should do less online and more outreach as it is a better preventative model.”**

**“Outreach works and promotes community and discouraged car travel and allows active travel routes to deliver folk to local centres. Also keeps the local community halls open with a purpose.”**

**“The outreach services are amazing and they should remain available. However, there isn't always a health visitor at these services, so relying on such services without additional help available is not sensible where a person may be at risk.”**

**“Outreach is good in theory except it becomes a service you have to book in for rather than a place to go to when you need it! Will outreach be face to face or online?!!”**

**“Outreach is great but often relies on those delivering the outreach to use their own transportation to bring resources - as a result resources are often limited or not of the quality you would have ‘on site’. It also is a problem for storing resources and them being cared for properly.”**

**“Delivering of services through outreach would be beneficial for service users in accessing services. Outreach is essential for inclusivity and ensuring that those who need services most can access them to support reduction in health inequalities. The proposed outreach does not consider enough of Sheppey within the Swale borough. Consideration for outreach on the East of the Isle of Sheppey has not been included in the consultation, leaving a gap in service provision for an area that has a population with high need. The cuts to the voluntary and community sector within Swale and Sheppey in particular will have an additional impact to the needs of residents on the island, and therefore this must be considered when assessing co-location and delivery of services on the island.”**

Some example verbatims from referring to some of the anticipated challenges with outreach services relating to the services under consultation can be found below:

**“Many children and young adults with disabilities need consistency and reliability and this includes where the venue for a service is. Other considerations need to be taken into account. Is the facility going to be used at the same time by other members of the public. Many disabled adults and children are very vulnerable for a variety of reasons so the need to keep them safe is greater than the general public. Also, many will have sensory issues around lighting and noise and busy environments, which will need to be taken into account, as well as parking to allow easy access for those with physical disabilities and mobility problems.”**

**“It’s unattractive. Likely to be very confusing for those with anxiety learning disabilities and autism. Would not have attended the alternatives suggested as an isolated new mother due to distance and location on busy roads. Having a disabled child meant public transport was not possible and no parking at many sites. Walking along 2 miles of constant traffic also dangerous and impossible with young children.”**

**“It needs to be in a place that is central, a town, a centre that has a nursery where parents can use other services at the same time, ask questions when taking their child to nursery.”**

**“Outreach is great, should be done in conjunction with a base, so that everyone knows where they can go if they are in need of a service. Outreach not always possible or well publicised.”**

**“The use of outreach services is often not well publicised or advertised and the signage for those access venues is poor so people don’t even know the outreach services exist. Those venues are sometimes not fully accessible and lack parking. Having permanent locations is comforting- families know where to go, the setting becomes familiar, the staff become familiar and this helps build up lasting trust between families and service providers that is invaluable and cannot be replicated in outreach settings.”**

**“Outreach is important for those who cannot access services through centres but it's not good enough. Temporary basis means at some point it will be withdrawn leaving people with the same issues they had before it was available, we need permanent and reliable services.”**

**“You would need to reach a certain number of people who require access closer to their community before this is arranged. Again, this is not going to benefit those that use these services as needed and when needed and those people may need to wait numerous weeks**

**to get the support they are seeking when it could have been more easily available to them if their local services were not closed.”**

**“Please consider the impact on the service users’ disabilities, e.g. an autistic person will not respond to change, needs advanced notice, look of the building etc even a change within the building from one appointment to the next can be hard to manage.”**

**“Health visiting services need to be in a more permanent place and serve the local community/ward rather than the whole of the town district. Outreach needs to be buggy accessible, in a place with good transport links and parking that is nearby or onsite.”**

**“The location of centralised services needs to be appropriate to the area of highest need within the locality, ensuring that the site can be accessed not just by car but by all other forms of transport, including good public transport links for those who do not have access to a car or cannot afford taxis, as well as cycle or footpath links. The service offer provided by the hub should be appropriate to the needs of the location. A measure of the issues facing the local demographic should be taken to ensure that the provision is being provided on a factual basis and not just because it is a nice to have or seen as a requirement by a small number of residents. Detailed consultation with the local residents should take place to find out how they wish to access the services, including opening hours and what the offer looks like. When co-locating a number of services into the same location, it is vital that the appropriateness of specific services working alongside each other is considered. For example mixing a young person service with that of probation will lead to safeguarding issues and mixing youth services aimed at teenagers within children’s centres, as teenagers feel uncomfortable accessing them. The layout of the site can assist in alleviating some of these issues, as if there are opportunities to section off areas with separate entrances and/or utilise parts of the building when others are not open, although any options should be very carefully considered.”**

**“That as a minimum, the same level, standard and frequency of service is still provided. There could be more users and visitors to a particular building as a result of co-location and this may result in a busier service with more waiting times. Therefore, the provision of adequate resources is a key consideration. Ease of accessibility for all users – distance, topography and the ease of using a particular mode of transport including public, walking and cycling. There are concerns about confidentiality, residents’ willingness to ‘share’ with other services, which may reduce access rather than improve it.”**

**“One of our major concerns is that the move to outreach will leave services with no structure and we will start see them disappear or reduce over time as we have seen with some of the facilities not being re-opened after Covid.”**

Some examples of delivering outreach services were put forward which identify potential ideas / suggestions for consideration:

**“I have delivered outreach and the constraint's on a toddler group ,stay and play group are many ,the equipment ,furniture, child size would need to me moved and stored or moved to another location, but toys would be packed away at the end of every session and moved to another location ,there would be no child centred displays on the walls ,no child size toilet facilities and hand wash basins ,no child centred facilities .there would be limited facilities for parents ,no baby changing rooms ,no safe area for small toddlers to crawl and roll.”**

**“Outreach services will be critical to maintaining and growing services in the community, particularly where it is proposed to close permanent venues. The consultation has scant information on where or how these outreach services will be delivered. Many community venues, such as village halls, already have busy schedules and may not be able to accommodate extra activities. Social interaction is important for young families and delivering outreach services in the home will reduce the ability of families to form peer networks and support each other. We would like to be reassured that there will be sufficient skilled staff to deliver a comprehensive outreach service in both urban and rural areas of the borough.”**

**“The opportunity for outreach in Eastern Sheppey is very Limited. Warden Bay Village Hall is used full time from the local nursery. An outreach group was delivered previously from 2019-2020 from the Guide Hall in Eastchurch however this came with many challenges;**

- 1. The families that we reached was low in numbers even with significant advertisement through Facebook, the timetable, leaflet drops to all local houses.**
- 2. Storage- we were not able to store any resources so we had to ensure the staff that were delivering the groups could transport the resources in their personal vehicles. We was not able to provide an enabling environment due to these restrictions therefore families preferred the centre.**
- 3. Safeguarding- there were many risks with the venue due to the old radiators being too hot , the swinging doors allowing children to push them back and forth and the other rooms from the building being freely accessible.**
- 4. Outreach is time consuming with travel and ensuring that we had enough time at the hall to warm it up and set up- This session took 2 people x 3.5hrs = 7hrs for a 1hr delivery session.**

**Outreach can work well if the venue has capacity to store resources, these resources will need to be available to store at the different locations if not they will need to be purchased. Outreach requires more time due to the staff it requires and the time it requires to set up, this could have an impact on the service delivery.”**

**“They did this with Lilypad children's centre. It never reopened on Minster primary school site so they used to use new road community centre. It was better than nothing but so many people were there and the building was much smaller. Plus staff had to drive here and there between centres carrying toys and food around. Bizarre choice.”**

**“We deliver some outreach services, using the local library and outdoor spaces. As a rule, outreach services are less well attended. The library is difficult when delivering a service for families with numerous children. in a purpose built centre, we are able to contain the children in a safe, secure environment. Travelling to and fro for outreach becomes costly for staff travel expenses and we are reliant on staff good will to transport resources in their own vehicles. I would suggest we need a vehicle that is fit for purpose i.e.: with storage for play and learning resources to be transported to any outreach sessions. There are health and safety issues with manual handling when moving equipment regularly. we would need to transport a large range of resources to ensure high quality delivery of services. alternatively or maybe additionally it would be good to have one or two permanent outreach sites where we could store some resources.”**

**“This is great for rural areas and Cranbrook team have worked outreach to Hawkhurst. But a) of services are based in Tunbridge Wells how often will staff "outreach", where will they have access to space to write notes, eat lunch, go to the toilet. Have locality bases gives teams a direction and focus on that area. They build community and get to know the families locally and see them grow. If team are centrally based, it's more likely to mean different staff members covering activities that do take place and therefore the consistency to build trust and relationships diminish, having a negative impact on the families you are trying to reach.”**

Some consultees provided verbatims indicating they were unsure what the outreach services would look like in practical terms and how it was going to be advertised / managed over time:

**“It is unclear from the proposals how outreach will change in Maidstone, and how it will impact service delivery in Maidstone as the current consultation is only outlining changes to property, which for Maidstone is the closure of two Children's Centres and the relocation Adult Education.”**

**“An increased journey time to a Children's Centre for some of our most vulnerable families will impact on their ability to attend valuable activity groups aimed at children's early learning and development, as well as reducing parent isolation and improving parenting skills. The increased travel time could be a barrier to some for attending vital appointments, such as child development checks. Recent feedback from providers has included a post Covid-19, sometimes marked, delayed identification of additional need, due in part to the necessity of some of these checks being conducted virtually, or by telephone during the pandemic. Would virtual checks be reintroduced for those families now unable to access their nearest children's centre?”**

**“The efficiency and effectiveness of any outreach is all about local knowledge. I would like to know how much 'on the ground' information is gleaned about specific service in specific areas from both users, volunteers who help facilitate them and paid employees on the front line. How much 'joined up' work will happen when multiple agencies are involved. When 'amalgamated' how will budgets that have already been cut be 'ring fenced' or protected to ensure that outreach remains in place in some form. How much do you know about where people meet together, which includes other than community halls. There are a myriad of private owned spaces which provide services, members clubs such as bowls, tennis etc., social clubs, small church halls etc., run by the community for the community. How much consideration will be given to a full audit of 'temporary' spaces which are accessible by public transport for example. No point in having services that no one can get to.”**

**“The concept of Outreach is fine but with an ever changing demography here in Dartford we need to keep this potentially most agile way of delivering services under constant review. The needs of different areas will morph over time and I'd like to see a regular review process in collaboration with the borough to ensure we're constantly feeding what we know into future planning. If we get Outreach wrong we'll be chasing those potentially in need rather than being ahead of what they need. Gateways and hubs make it easier to signpost users and to pick up if they may need other services as well. Outreach must be integrated with this knowledge.”**

**“As part of this consultation, you have provided us with little information or details of what outreach services will look like as part of the proposals. You have designed the proposal which includes closing vital buildings without providing the information required to understand where or what outreach will replace the much needed services. The locations for delivery of outreach are crucial as not only do we have high levels of deprived and vulnerable families, but many of these families also live in rural locations with minimal access to public transport. You have stated that outreach will be ‘demand led’, however you have not provided us with details on how this will work practically. You have also not provided evidence on how you intend to respond to high levels of demand without physical locations for residents to visit – we have an example of this already within a town centre and youth outreach – with no suitable physical buildings within the area, the outreach offer is limited in its impact. The detail lacking in your proposals around what the outreach services will look like, does not allow us to have a true picture of how you are going to support residents and so therefore leaves us extremely concerned that there will be gaps in service provision.”**

**“It is noted that the document states that the exact location of the new proposed outreach venues cannot be confirmed at this time as no firm decisions have been made on the proposals; as this will be subject to community need and availability of community premises. We consider that more certainty will be required in this regard before the permanent closure of any existing buildings which offer existing services.**

**It is also noted that the consultation document mentions that some outreach services could be provided at existing library buildings, or by home visits which could be more comfortable and convenient for some users to access support and guidance. However, the consultation documents also indicate that this is yet to be decided (post consultation) and the level of service provision is currently unknown. We also have concerns that libraries may not be appropriate for some uses – for example children’s activities may be too noisy or there may not be enough private rooms/space for confidential/sensitive meetings such as counselling. In addition, there could be cost implications for KCC in adapting the space/library building to be used.”**



## ACCESSING KCC SERVICES DIGITALLY

- Consultees were asked to indicate how they felt about accessing KCC services digitally from a list of pre-defined statements. Please note that this question was asked generally and not specifically in relation to the services under consultation.
- 64% of consultees answering indicated they feel confident about doing things online.
- The safety of using technology to access services and the security of personal information is a concern for some (13% selecting), as well as a perception of KCC's digital services and information too difficult to use (10%) and not feeling confident in using technology (9%).
- 10% of consultees answering indicated that paying for devices and internet connection is too expensive and 8% indicated their internet is too slow.
- A small proportion of consultees linked the question to children service provision and commented that certain activities are not suitable for online delivery.

**Accessing services digitally means using a computer, mobile phone, tablet or other device to look up information about services or to join sessions or activities virtually. Please select from the list below the statements that may apply to you about accessing KCC services digitally...?**

Base: all answering (1,476), consultees had the option to select more than one response. Themes will over 30 responses reported.

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
I am confident about doing things online	983	64%
I don't think it's safe using technology to access services. I'm concerned about the security of my information	197	13%
Paying for devices and internet connection (including mobile data) is too expensive	159	10%
I find KCC's digital services and information too difficult to use	157	10%
I don't feel confident using technology	137	9%
Prefer face to face / socialising / more personal / building relationships	135	9%
My internet is too slow	114	8%
Children's / babies activities cannot be carried out online / reducing not increasing screentime	55	4%
I don't know how to do it	50	3%
I don't have a device (computer, mobile phone, tablet)	42	3%
Digital exclusion / not everyone can access the internet	42	3%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
I don't have the internet at home	41	3%
Some activities are not appropriate / suitable online	36	2%
Detrimentially affect elderly / disabled / vulnerable people	35	2%
Affects mental health / isolation / loneliness	34	2%
Digital poverty / lack of devices / broadband / unreliable service	33	2%

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ACCESSING SERVICES ONLINE

Consultees were also given the opportunity to comment in their words on what they believe to be important when accessing services online. 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. 61% of consultees provided a comment at this question.

- The most important consideration when accessing services online is the perceived ease of use / simple access / being user friendly (45%). This is followed by having an option of face to face service delivery / consultees indicating they prefer face to face access to services (23%).
- 16% of consultees commented that they believe online access to services isn't an inclusive approach and cited the elderly, those with access and those unable to use online services as examples to illustrate their views.
- 12% of consultees commented that clear information is important and 11% commented that security / safety / privacy is important.
- 12% of consultees commented that online access needs to be reliable with links that work and devices that are compatible.
- 11% of consultees commented that online delivery needs to be appropriate for the service in question.

### What is important to you when accessing services online ...?

Base: all answering (1,079)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Ease of use / simple access / being user friendly	487	45%
Still need to include face to face option / preference for face to face	249	23%
Online isn't inclusive (elderly / those without access / unable to use)	175	16%
Clear information	171	16%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Reliable / links that work / device compatible	130	12%
Security / safe / privacy	120	11%
The service delivered needs to be appropriate for online delivery	118	11%
Able to speak to someone / contact number if needed	106	10%
Up to date information / accurate	64	6%
Interactive / book online	28	3%
Other	28	3%

Some example verbatims from the theme of ease of use / simple access / being user friendly can be found below:

**“The information is clear, easily available and there is a route to contact a person should further clarity or information be required.”**

**“Clarity in the format. KCC's digital platform is so cumbersome and complicated. Far too many text boxes and writing, not engaging or user-friendly at all. Just long lists of text, and links. I find it hard to navigate, I wouldn't be surprised if others who are less used to working on websites get lost trying to find information.”**

**“Finding information quickly, receiving a quick response or being kept up to date. Confidence that my inquiry doesn't go into an abyss and having a contact number in case I need to speak to an actual person.”**

Some example verbatims from the theme of still needing to include face to face options / having a preference for face to face access can be found below:

**“That the service is appropriate to be delivered online. Covid should have taught us (especially for children's development) that as much content and sessions should be delivered in person, for long term benefit.”**

**“That online services are used selectively or as an alternative for those unable to meet in person. Meeting in person is preferable for many, and human contact is important!”**

**“It's only useful for certain things and some information. It does not replace human contact and connection. Families being able to get out, see other people and interact together in a meaningful way.”**

**“I would not want to access services online, I like to go in person for my child to socialise and make friends, and it is important for my mental health i can access in person services. If you are sat behind a screen you can feel very lonely and unsupported and put on the spot to communicate.”**

Some example verbatims from the concerns put forward regarding inclusivity can be found below:

**“I'm fine but you're not considering the elderly, and those with disabilities and mental health and learning needs. Online isn't inclusive. Having Apps for everything isn't inclusive for these individuals . Think about the longer term consequences of the decisions you make.”**

**“Online services will only be available by the more well to do residents. The people most likely to need help are either computer illiterate, do not have a smart phone and are poor at technology.”**

**“Accessing services online is not always accessible. It's not easy for the elderly, the disabled or the technologically illiterate to use and this is a very real form of discrimination known as the digital divide. Telling your service user families to 'just go online' sounds simple but for many families this is an unreasonable request. The cost of living crisis is also a factor- having broadband access at home is a luxury some cannot afford now. Online provision is often patchy, with no real human connection built in. There's also the data protection issue- can families trust their data isn't being scraped and sold to the highest bidder? Personally I might find online services functional but for so many families this just isn't the reality and I much prefer in person contact with service providers of all kinds.”**

**“There are people that are at an age or a disability or due to financial reasons are unable to access digital services. There needs to dedicated digital champion in these outreach hubs that is available to help show and teach the community to access services as it will allow them to be move involved.”**

**“Four wards in the borough scored highly in respect of poor digital connectivity. These are all rural wards that will be affected by the proposed closure of Little Explorers and Bluebells Childrens Centres. We understand the move towards more online services and information, however for many this option will be difficult to access due to a lack of broadband or slow speeds. There must be careful assessment of how digital services are used and expanded so they do not result in increasing isolation for those who are less able to use digital technology or would derive greater benefit from in-person services and opportunities to share experiences and learning with other families.”**

**“Careful consideration needs to be given to the types of services that can be delivered online and the risks to vulnerable groups, such as mothers and small children, who benefit from face-to-face contact and engagement with trained staff, particularly around safeguarding interventions. We feel that there is a lack of assessment and consideration of Digital Inclusion. Digital Inclusion extends well beyond broadband speed and into the affordability of both Wi-Fi/Internet access and devices which allow people to access services reliably online. If services can't be accessed online due to digital exclusion, it places a burden on other organisations i.e. groups and organisations across the Voluntary and Community Sector.”**

**“I think it's important to be confident about privacy. However, there are some services that just don't work online. Particularly for someone who is suffering from mental ill-health, what you need is personal connection which really cannot be achieved in the same way online.”**

**“The development of a digital offer to support the Family Hub model could also impact those most vulnerable families with children under five, who may also be experiencing**

**digital poverty. According to an NCFE article and Ofcom data from 2021, two of the groups least likely to have home internet access, and just behind those aged over 65 years, are lower income households and the most financially vulnerable.”**

When filtering response to this question on consultees who use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member) only, feedback is broadly consistent in terms of key themes identified:

- Perceived ease of use / simple access / being user friendly (44% of consultees commenting).
- Having an option of face to face service delivery / consultees indicating they prefer face to face access to services (26%)
- Online access to services isn't an inclusive approach and cited the elderly, those with access and those unable to use online services as examples (17%)
- Clear information (16%)
- Online delivery needs to be appropriate for the service in question (13%)
- Access needs to be reliable with links that work and devices that are compatible (11%)
- Security / safety / privacy (10%)

### **What is important to you when accessing services online ...?**

Base: Currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (671); responses 5% and over reported

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Ease of use / access / simple / user friendly	295	44%
Still needs to include a face to face option / face to face access is better	172	26%
Online isn't inclusive (elderly / those without access / unable to use tech)	111	17%
Clear information	106	16%
Reliable / links that work / device compatible	77	11%
Security / safe / privacy	69	10%
The service delivered needs to be appropriate for online delivery	88	13%
Able to speak to someone / contact number if needed	66	10%
Up to date information / accurate	35	5%

## RESPONSE TO FAMILY HUBS MODEL PROPOSALS

Consultees were also given the opportunity to provide any comments in their words on what they believe to be important to consider when transitioning to the Family Hub Model. 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. 34% of consultees provided a comment at this question.

- The most important consideration put forward by consultees for consideration of the Family Hub transition is users being able to get there / travel there / location (46%). This includes consideration that some would prefer to, or only be able to, walk to reach the location or access via convenient and reasonably priced public transport.
- This is followed by ensuring access is possible for everyone that needs to (with consideration to different age groups / demographics and possible needs - 27%). This includes provision of service for all concerned and the equipment / space setting / staffing for all needs.
- 24% of consultees commented that they believe it is important that individual services provided under the Family Hub offering isn't diluted / remains distinct for each user group.
- 21% of consultees expressed concerns about the suitability of proposed space / buildings for the services under consultation and 18% expressed concerns about the compatibility of the range of services being provided in one place.

### What do you think is important for us to consider when we transition to the Family Hub model...?

Base: all answering (602)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Users being able to get there / travel there / location	277	46%
Access for all (ages / demographics / needs)	166	27%
That services aren't diluted / remains distinct for each group	147	24%
Concerns about suitability of space / building / fit for purpose	126	21%
Concerns about compatibility of services in one space	109	18%
Object / bad idea	82	14%
Parking / free parking	34	6%
Good idea	22	4%
Other	31	5%

Some example verbatims from the key themes of users being able to get there / travel there / location and access for all can be found below:

**“The distance between sites for the villages. Without having the availability of reliable, regular public transport in rural areas, most families would not be able to reach these new hubs.”**

**“To provide these services near homes in the communities not town centres. Children of young age will not benefit from this if they need to travel. Parents may not allow their children to use the service due to the new location. It is a shame that children are going to be affected due to the over-spending of a county. More children have moved to the area from London Boroughs and services are being removed or moved to location that may not be safe for all ages.”**

**“Consider the highest need children and families. How will they get to the Family Hub? Are there transport links available? Are mothers expected to push a buggy with a toddler and a baby for an unrealistic distance? Will the new location make access for some impossible? There is no mention of outreach services to the highest need families. Will this be offered? If there is no outreach than the levels of inequality will increase as those most in need will be unable to access services. We need to be mindful that there are no hard to reach families just hard to reach services and those planning and developing services need to bear this in mind.”**

**“I think in theory this is a great idea but it’s not right for our community unless some other things are changed first. We need cheaper and more reliable public transport. Currently it’s expensive to take a return bus trip and on occasions you’re lucky if the bus arrives on time. This could be stressful if you have an appointment to get too. If this isn’t dealt with first you would be isolating those who do not drive and forcing those who do drive to use their car when climate change is at the forefront of many peoples’ minds.”**

**“The engagement of services planned to co-locate early on - they will support with the planning of any practical and logistic issues, as well as ensuring their families needs’ are considered. Accessibility of locations for those who need parking, or those who rely on public transport - do not expect families to be happy about navigating multiple buses with young children and babies, families will not choose to spend an hour travelling to locations.”**

**“Communicating the move to residents is essential. This needs to be a thorough campaign using both modern and classic methods of communication. Explaining the benefits of such a move not financially but tangibly for the user will be advantageous. We outlined the improvements to accessibility and the safe storing of prams. These are two key benefits of using the hub over the centre.”**

**“This consultation asks parents to consider the suitability of a Family Hub model without any assurances as to what services we can guarantee are in them. The fact that the transport modelling identifies not one, but two or three potential hub locations which are accessible by public transport indicates that they intend to run each service quite differently and parents in Whitstable can reasonably be expected to travel to services in Herne Bay, Canterbury and Whitstable. The people they meet in these services will not be able to provide a coherent network of peer support in the way that would happen if you were meeting regularly with people who live closer to your own home.”**

Some example verbatims expressing concerns about the suitability of space and compatibility of services in one space can be found below:

**“There is a big difference between a 1 year old and a 15 year old. How these services operate in practice to provide vulnerable new mothers a safe space to seek advice is vital otherwise some may be put off seeking face to face help in those early months and years.”**

**“It is hard enough to find and access these services, with already incomprehensible waiting times for support. Why on earth would you make them more difficult to access - to make the waiting times shorter as more people give up with trying to access?”**

**“0-19 is a vast age range! I don’t want to take my one year old where there are also teenagers around. That doesn’t feel safe or like a calm and child-friendly environment! Please, send one of your staff members to a children’s centre and then to a youth hub and the difference will be very obvious. There is no way I’d be taking my young child anywhere where there are teenagers also accessing services. I want a space specifically catering to small children that has been designed to minimise risk to children and with their development and safety in mind.”**

**“Rural locations still need a local provision. 8/9 miles is not an acceptable distance to access services. Youth services can also be negatively impacted by the addition of baby/toddler services. Are youths 12+ really going to use a service where there are babies and toddlers around? No. And so they are displaced.”**

**“The needs of the different groups you would be serving. Putting potentially vulnerable young people next to people with new babies is entirely inappropriate. They are vulnerable in different ways and need to be in entirely different spaces.”**

**“Children suffering severe mental health trauma are not going to be comfortable with noisy kids being around! And noisy kids are not going to understand the considerations needed for those with special needs. I don’t believe it is safe, especially for the youngest babies / toddlers to be around children with severe learning difficulties that unfortunately can be aggressive when distressed.”**

**“I think it looks like you’re throwing everyone under the age of 19 in together even though the difference in the kind of help an 18 year old needs to that of a three year old is massive, just to save money I believe it will be to the detriment of the children in the local communities.”**

Some consultees expressed a desire to collaborate, broaden the potential service offering and make improvements to proposals:

**“Co-design with the district/borough authority as there is further opportunity to co-locate other local services from these hubs. We need to design these services from a user perspective and boundaries/differing responsibilities of KCC/borough/district mean little to most so we need to work together to deliver the services residents would expect to see in one place.”**

**“Consultation and communication with stakeholders on suitable services, which could include a whole host of support networks (policing e.g. CSU/CSP for Domestic Abuse,**



**Drugs and Alcohol advice, OneYou Kent for Health provision and many other services). This requires detailed conversations and will be dependent on the suitability of the building as to what services can be put in. Can KCC advise how the detailed conversations around this are to occur with stakeholders and residents in order to give a more fully informed answer to this question. Consideration also needs to be given to transportation and access to any hub created. There may need to be satellite hubs, which could be located in other existing buildings (funding would be needed). The £4million sum that has been quoted for reinvestment back requires more attention. Can KCC give more detail on the savings that will be made from closing such significant and large numbers of buildings across Kent? It is highly likely that more money from the savings made will be needed to develop the new models of working. How much of the Transformation Status funding can be used to top up the reinvestment amount?"**

**"The Family Hub agenda gives opportunity for us to broaden our work to include wider links and opportunities for integrated working with the extended age reach and we are keen to work with KCC to ensure all children and families receive the support they need including those in the early years and of school age. We would like to work collaboratively with KCC to consider the longer-term requirements for children's centre/Family Hub estate and the integration agenda to ensure the needs of families in Kent are met. For many years children's centres have provided an integrated family hub where holistic care can be supported, and it should be considered that the wider utilisation of ad hoc estate would not create the same sense of community. These provided an opportunity for families to meet and seek support but also for services to identify those who may need more help. As part of the Family Hub development there is an opportunity to create a branded image for the Start for Life/Family Hub offer. At present, with the delivery of services from multiple sites there is a risk services lose their identity and families aren't able to access a range of services "under one roof".**

**There are operational concerns that the current proposals do not account for the increased occupation within Family Hubs for these programmes to be successfully delivered. Access to venues with onsite creche facilitated to run co-delivered group interventions as part of the Family Hub delivery plan was recognised as an important consideration. Many of the sites visited do not have access to on-site creche facilities which are provided within the current children's centre footprint.**

**Midwifery are a key partner in the delivery of family hubs and therefore would welcome the opportunity for strategic discussions regarding the location of services in the future as the family hub model evolves. Feedback from our colleagues tell us that the practical day to day aspects of delivering their role are important and with the Kent Communities Programme we would like to encourage the continuation of District-level discussions to enable staff to have access to the facilities they require – in some areas this may be as simple as storage solutions for resources and in others having access to on-site parking."**

**"I understand the Needs model and how it works but I also think if you are looking for long term all areas need to be considered. Mental health of children in particular from the pandemic doesn't always fall into the Needs areas and is in fact all areas. If you are providing good sensible options that are open to all then this will be a plan that will not only safeguard the future of our children but also that of the county. It is also an opportunity to think outside the box! To look not just at the way the UK works in its models but further and to lead from the front in being innovative and not choosing safe options."**

## PROPOSALS TO HAVE FEWER BUILDINGS

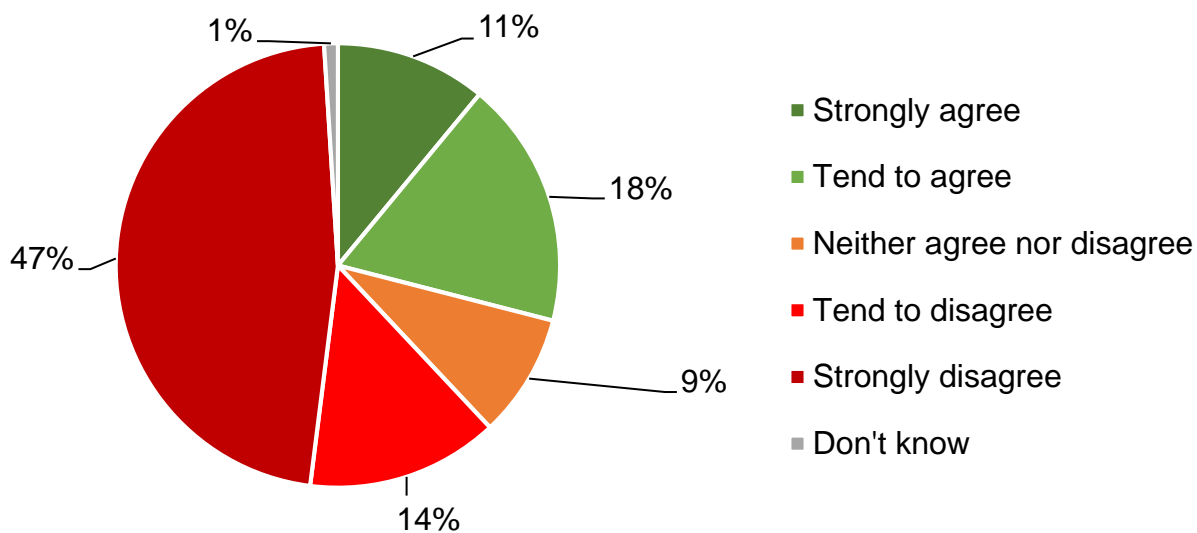
- 29% of all consultees answering indicated they agree with the proposal to have fewer building (11% indicated they strongly agree).
- 61% of all consultees answering indicated they disagree with the proposal (47% indicated they strongly disagree). 9% neither agree nor disagree.

**Our work so far has led us to propose working from fewer permanent buildings, meaning that some of our buildings would close. This is because we need to reduce our costs and reduce our carbon emissions. Using the Needs Framework to design where and how we deliver services means we will be able to meet community needs with fewer permanent buildings.**

**How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to have fewer buildings?**

Base: all answering (1,603)

AGREEMENT OVERVIEW	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Net: Agree	466	29%
Net: Disagree	973	61%



SUPPORTING DATA	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Strongly agree	173	11%
Tend to agree	293	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	149	9%
Tend to disagree	226	14%
Strongly disagree	747	47%
Don't know	15	1%

There are significant differences in agreement with the proposal by demographic:

- A higher proportion of female residents disagree with the proposal (62%) compared to male residents (34%).
- Agreement with the approach taken increases with age with 13% of residents aged 25-34 agreeing with the proposal and 58% of residents aged 65 & over agreeing.
- A higher proportion of residents who have children or are expecting children disagree with the proposal (67%) compared to residents who do not have children (30%).
- 68% of resident consultees who use at least one of the prompted consultation services disagree with the approach. Whilst comparably lower, it should be noted that 47% of those who do not currently use these services also disagree with the proposal.

### How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to have fewer buildings?

<b>AGREEMENT OVERVIEW - BY DEMOGRAPHIC (number of consultees answering reported in brackets)</b>	<b>Net Agree %</b>	<b>Net Disagree %</b>
Male resident (161)	54%	34%
Female resident (760)	28%	62%
Resident aged 25-34 (220)	13%	81%
Resident aged 35-49 (301)	25%	66%
Resident aged 50-64 (210)	44%	41%
Resident aged 65 & over (152)	58%	27%
Resident with children / expecting children (653)	23%	67%
Resident with no children (173)	60%	30%
Resident with children aged 0-1 years old (250)	12%	83%
Resident with children aged 2-5 years old (243)	11%	82%
Resident with children aged 6-10 years old (142)	22%	70%
Resident with children aged 11-19 years old (160)	37%	46%
At least weekly user of one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (624)	16%	76%
Currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (1,028)	22%	68%
Do not currently use at least one of the prompted consultation services (personal or other household member – residents only) (555)	42%	47%

Out of the 15 consultees completing the Easy Read version of the consultation questionnaire, 5 indicated they agreed with the proposal to have fewer buildings and 8 disagreed. 2 indicated they were uncertain.

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There are differences in agreement with the proposal to have fewer buildings by organisation:

- Of the 15 Parish/Town/Borough/District Councils who completed the consultation questionnaire in an official capacity, 5 indicated they agree with the proposal to co-locate some services. 8 disagree.
  - Of the 27 Parish/Town/Borough/District/County councillors who completed the consultation questionnaire, 10 indicated they agree with the proposal. 16 disagree.
  - Of the 31 educational establishments who completed the consultation questionnaire, 7 indicated they agree with the proposal. 20 disagree.
  - Of the 32 charity, voluntary or community sector organisations who completed the consultation questionnaire, 10 indicated they agree with the proposal. 21 disagree.
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## OTHER COMMENTS ON CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

Consultees were also given the opportunity to provide any other comments or options they think should be considered in the proposals 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. 46% of consultees provided a comment at this question.

- A vast range of comments were provided by consultees at this question. However, the most common are a perception that proposals detrimentally affect families / children (31% of consultees commenting) and objecting to proposed closures / changes to the services under consultation (22%).
- 20% of consultees expressed concerns for the services under consultation and that they are vital to the community / a lifeline to users and that service provision that is either walking distance of access on reliable / cost effective public transport is crucial (20%).
- 9% of consultees expressed a desire for savings to be made elsewhere and 9% commented that the services under consultation were already oversubscribed and need more funding / not less support moving forward.

**Please tell us if there are any other options you think we should consider, or if you have any other comments you wish to make about the proposals in this consultation...?**

Base: all answering (808)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Detrimentially affect families / children	254	31%
Object to proposed closures / mergers / changes in services / don't close centres	175	22%
Services / centres / vital to community / lifeline / don't cut services	164	20%
Accessibility is crucial / within walking distance / on public transport routes (consider cost & availability)	163	20%
Negative impact on mental health / socialisation / development	92	11%
Make savings / cuts elsewhere	73	9%
Services already oversubscribed / need more not less / more funding	70	9%
Detrimentially affect elderly / disabled / vulnerable	68	8%
Criticism of consultation in general / data / survey / need to consult with users by other means	66	8%
Will new venues have the same facilities / have sufficient resources / be large enough / less provision / oversubscribed	65	8%
Long term costs / consequences - NHS / schools/education / social services	51	6%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Offer more services / appeal to more people / increase usage / longer opening hours	49	6%
Location suggestions / specific centre suggestions (excluding centre closures)	46	6%
Relocate facilities/services into other existing buildings	46	6%
Add paid for services / donations / raise funds / rent out space	43	5%
Concerns over what will happen with buildings / more housing / renting out / kept empty	40	5%
Understand cuts have to be made / the need for KCC to save money	39	5%
Detrimentially affect lower income households / cost of living crisis means more support needed	37	5%
Work with / form partnerships with other organisations / other LA departments	37	5%
Net zero is a fallacy / emissions will increase / more people in cars driving to services/centres	34	4%
Increased population / new homes / development not considered	30	4%
Refurbish / update existing buildings / make them greener / energy efficient	29	4%
Availability & cost of parking / parking is essential	24	3%
Special consideration should be given to rural areas	23	3%
Incompatibility of groups / facilities / privacy	22	3%
Must be central location / present in each district	20	2%
Agree with proposals / close some centres / streamline services	19	2%
Implications for staff / concerns over staff	19	2%
Lack of infrastructure in area supporting development	16	2%
Offer mobile services / home visits / scheduled visits to different areas to offer services	15	2%
Safeguarding / security concerns	13	2%
Advertise services more / may lead to increase in usage	13	2%

Some example verbatims from the key themes of detrimentally affecting families / children and objecting to proposed closures / mergers / changes in services / don't close centres can be found below:

**“While I fully appreciate that costs need to be cut at a time when costs are rising and local authorities are chronically underfunded, it feels like smaller communities are being disproportionately affected by these plans.”**

**“Priory being one the busiest centres should be reconsidered when talking about closing. All children centres are a valued part of families with young children from child development checks to being able to collect food parcels.”**

**“Please, please I urge you reconsider your decision to close the youth hub at the Bridge. This will affect a lot of children negatively as they rely on this weekly. My daughter suffers terribly with anxiety since covid and this is a bit of a lifeline for her.”**

**“Please don't cut support to kids and those with additional needs. Think long term not just how long you're in your job. Align your proposal with projected housing, transport, and population increase in the areas.”**

**“During a time when vulnerable families and disabled need more services, cutting them in rural areas does not make sense. Ashford have a multitude of centres in close proximity. However, closing the Little Explorers centre, which is far away from any other permanent centre, would be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of these groups. The service needs to remain and show that the surrounding villages of Ashford Borough have the same right to local care, as those closer to Ashford.”**

**“People with learning disabilities depend on regular routines, familiar faces and people who understand their needs in detail. When any of these support services change the impact on disabled people is often greater than imagined. This seems unfair when life opportunities are already limited.”**

**“It is likely that parents (with limited time) will not engage in the consultation process. The consultation document is 116 pages long. This does not include the district design document EqIA. Additionally, you have to complete an online registration to complete the consultation questionnaire which takes added time and is an unnecessary barrier. In addition to this, we cannot establish why West Borough Children's Centre is not offered as an alternative to East Borough Children's Centre as part of the proposals. It is the same distance from East Borough as the nearest alternative (Sunshine Children's Centre) and closer than the second option offered (Greenfields in Shepway). It also has better transport links. It is currently closed Monday-Thursday, only opening on a Friday from 8.30-16.30.”**

## RESPONSE TO EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Consultees were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on the equality analysis conducted 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. It should be noted that 18% of consultees provided a comment at this question.

- Of those answering, the most common considerations put forward are ensuring the services are accessible / walking distance / access via suitable public transport (24%).
- Those commenting raise concerns for how the proposals will affect specific groups of residents who are disabled / have learning difficulties / SEN (15%), young people / children / families (15%) and low income households (11%).

**We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity, please add any comments below...?**

Base: all answering (316)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Services need to be accessible / walking distance / public transport / additional costs / parking provision	77	24%
Effect on disabled / those with learning difficulties / SEN	47	15%
Significant impact on young people / children / families	46	15%
All services / buildings should be open / accessible / inclusive of everyone (unspecified)	35	11%
Effect on low income households	35	11%
Will buildings be inclusive / suitable to offer current services / accessible (disabled)	32	10%
Concerns over impact on those with mental health issues / isolation	31	10%
Online must be inclusive - how to reach all groups, elderly, etc., / digital poverty	24	8%
Discriminate on age / gender specifically women	19	6%
Diversity is irrelevant to this / don't go too far with equality/diversity	19	6%
Effect on elderly	17	5%
Effect on vulnerable (unspecified)	15	5%
Proposals disadvantage everyone	13	4%
Disadvantage ethnic minorities / English as a second language / refugees / travellers / LGBTQ	13	4%
All considered appropriately / fine as is / no concerns	12	4%
Buildings could be unsuitable for different groups/activities mixing	7	2%



	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Impact on rural communities	6	2%
Centres encourage community cohesion / people mixing	6	2%
Increasing population not adequately considered	5	2%
Long term costs / consequences - NHS / Schools/education / social services	5	2%
Don't close centres	5	2%
Criticism of consultation	19	6%
Is this consultation reaching everyone - on paper / online / easy read	17	5%
Other	25	8%

Some example verbatims from the key considerations identified can be found below:

**“Please consider the impact this will have on women - the main care givers and users of this service. Already on reduced income due to maternity leave, or not able to earn due to the costs of childcare. This will impact their mental health.”**

**“Making people go further isolates families who cannot travel for physical reasons or cannot afford to travel, effecting mental health, meaning more pressure on GPs and mental health services.”**

**“You should consider the equal right of allowing people to access these facilities in person. Not assuming everyone will use the internet/online to access these services, because some cannot afford or access this way. You are also making it more difficult.”**

**“Most of the people that will be truly affected by the closure will probably not complete this questionnaire, there is a lot to it and it probably should be simplified for some people.”**

**“This is a joke. These children centres help the minority with disabilities. Not to mention the vast amount of women it supports. The closure of these centres’ insults women and children.”**

**“Not everyone has the same capacity to travel from their home to a service in a different town/area, the proposal would lead to further inequality between those who can and cannot.”**

**“Public transport is expensive and unreliable. families do not have money to travel by these means. they are struggling to feed their families and keep them warm. Families who have a child with an additional need struggle to leave the house and would not use public transport due to the child's behaviour and other passengers’ attitudes even if they could afford the fare. you have not considered any of this and never do. speak to a few families who have an autistic child and live their life for a few days before saying a 30 minute public transport journey followed by a walk is suitable.”**

**“Although I've read the proposal with regards to your equality and diversity I don't think you realise the effects closing certain children's centres can have on individual families in the area with a disabled child.”**

**“Closing local centres in the areas will discourage people to access care and thus contributing to health inequalities.”**

**“The needs of disabled people cannot be met and fully understood using a virtual approach. Many disabled people have impacts on their ability that are only understood by a face to face approach.”**

**“The EqIA for the proposals is considered to cover all the expected equality and diversity characteristics of an EqIA. However, in considering these characteristics against the proposals, particularly the closure of buildings, the EqIA document does highlight how this may be problematic for some groups with specific characteristics e.g. age - the closure of children's centres for young children could disproportionately impact the 0-5 age group receiving support in relation to their development milestones associated with health, education and parent bonding. And for teenage parents who are less likely to hold a driver's licence and have access to a private vehicle, they will be more reliant on family/friends, public transport or walking to access services, which means they may use a service less frequently, resulting in a negative impact on young parents and their children if they are unable to access a centre. Mitigation measures and alternative provision are identified but these are mainly outreach and co-location services, the full details of which are not yet known as mentioned above.”**

**“We feel that more could be done in terms of engagement with Maidstone to ensure that the needs assessment is accurate, and data led. The impact of the proposals on areas of deprivation has not been considered; High Street Ward and Shepway North have been completely overlooked. We would also like to highlight our concerns about our Gypsy and Traveller Communities who access Children's Centre services in rural wards like Marden. We would like to be assured that they are engaged with and supported as part of these proposed changes to ensure that they have access to these services.**

**In terms of the EqIA completed as part of these proposals, there is no information on any direct promotion of this consultation to targeted groups i.e. centre users. Previous research with these groups is referred to in the EQIA and EQIA states that gaps in the data will be filled through this consultation process e.g. religion.**

**The recent census data (2021) should be used to evaluate need, not only in the wards where the Children's Centres are closing (Marden & Yalding and East) but in the wards that will be most impacted by the decisions. For example, East Borough Children's Centre is located on the periphery of High Street Ward. Its users are not going to be geographically ringfenced to East Ward. Its service users are most likely to come from High Street Ward which is the most deprived ward in Maidstone borough.”**



## IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - ASHFORD

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Ashford.

#### BLUEBELLS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 32 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 78% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 66% comment that it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users also praised the facilities provided in relation to the alternative(s) proposed (38%) and value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (25%).
- 16% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (32)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	25	78%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	21	66%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	12	38%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	8	25%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	5	16%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	9%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	2	6%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	6%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	2	6%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Our lives will dramatically change for the worse if they close bluebells as it’s our closest children’s centre and my kids are there every single week. It’s like a second home to them. All week long my toddler waits for the messy play session. She has grown in confidence since attending bluebells. As a baby born in the first national lockdown when all the facilities & groups were closed it’s been a long process supporting this era of toddlers into becoming more social as they spent 2 years shut away at home in a bubble of 6 people only, the messy play sessions, stay & play, baby sensory etc has helped massively in helping combat lockdown syndrome, these kids already had a massive disruption to the start of their lives and now they’re coming back out into the public and children’s centres are open again after what seemed like an eternity now to find out the centre might be closing is a big shock, unbelievable, it has made me feel incredibly sad and at a loss because we value bluebells so so much. I am gutted and I know the kids will be too.”**

**“Myself and my 3 year old attend a minimum of 1 session and maximum of 3 sessions at Bluebells each week. The staff are familiar with us and we have now built a rapport with them. We have tried other groups and locations but this one fits my son the best and has the best facilities for his needs. He likes consistency and so sticking with 1 centre for multiple sessions works brilliantly for him. The fact it has outdoor space too and a local park/field nearby is great for the summertime to extend our time out of the house.”**

**“I visit Bluebells at least twice a week. I have found it invaluable for supporting me as a new mum. I take my baby to groups as well as make appointments to see the Health Visitor there. It is much easier to get to than other children's centres where I would need to travel through the town. I feel it is important to keep centres in more rural areas as well as towns. I see many of the same parents at the centre who also use it frequently as would not necessarily be able to attend other centres.”**

**“Fewer people able to access vital services and play groups, particularly in the light of the cost of living crisis.”**

**“Has been an absolute life saver for me when I was coping with 3 years of school refusing with my son. Provided useful courses that I could attend (only because location was close). Was able to sign post for additional help/services. Additional support from other parents attending courses AS LOCAL. Would have received NO HELP if this facility in this location hadn't existed.”**

**“As a Public health assistant we will do development checks on babies and children from Bluebells. Personally I think it is not a good decision to close this centre. There are loads of rooms there that aren't used at the moment that could be utilised more proficiently.”**

## LITTLE EXPLORERS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 34 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 76% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 62% comment that it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (41%).
- 26% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (34)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	26	76%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	21	62%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	14	41%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	9	26%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	6	18%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	4	12%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	4	12%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	9%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	2	6%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Use this every week for parent toddler group and would hate to see it disappear. have used for over 11 years and know lots of families that live here who also benefit from the groups. so many new houses being built you'd be better investing in the building that getting rid of it and expecting people to travel.”**

**“I have found Little Explorers in Tenterden to be a vital source of support for me when pregnant and now since my son was born (he is 14 months old). The groups run by the lovely staff are invaluable. And the support has been vital.”**

**“I myself cannot drive so it’s useful to have a health visitor I can go to as I can't get to Ashford. My sister in-law has just had a new baby and will need to frequently visit a children's centre for her baby and she also cannot drive.”**

**“I won't have a place to go and see other mums. My son won't have a place to go and learn how to interact with other babies. It is important for us mums to have a place where we can find support which you might lack at home. For our mental health as well. It is difficult enough having a baby, not to add if I have to go to Ashford to access this services without having a car.”**

**“You are proposing to close the only two rural centres we have in the Ashford District. Doing so will result in families living in these rural areas who do not have access to money for a bus/taxi/car or even if they did feel confident enough to take this step and travel. KCC are not thinking about the people who will be left in these rural areas, leaving 3 big centres in Ashford town is a badly made decision.”**

**“Reduced ability to access services, especially those who are vulnerable and have lower income, who do not have access to car and cannot afford unreliable bus services.”**

**“No local service, other services proposed will be beyond reach due to time it takes to get to alternative services with a limited transport service and the cost incurred. Parents will miss out on the opportunity to build friendships in their local area possibly creating isolation. Children will not be taken to activities and this impacts on their development and the longer-term success in education. We talk about the importance of first 1001days in a child live and early intervention and prevention and then the service that provides this is being removed.”**

**“The rural communities will be severally negatively impacted with the closure of this centre. Our internet for some families is basically non-existent, buses are scarce and unreliable. Closing services in a growing area, such as Tenterden with one of the largest population, expecting them to travel a larger distance than anywhere else is insulting. Whilst Ashford have many centres left open in close proximity, the families of this growing town, will have to up their carbon footprint and travel further distances to get the same opportunities. There are many families in rural poverty in Tenterden and are known to the services. Expecting them to travel over 11 miles whilst others in the borough are expected to travel 2 is an insult to those on the outer borders.”**

**“Already been impacted by reduced hours at Little Explorers as I've needed to meet a client in Tenterden but have been left with nowhere to meet her on the days that she is available. She's very isolated and would have benefited from being linked into the children's centre. The referral was from social services and is part of her CP plan however it is looking as though we will not be able to provide the support needed due to lack of space to meet her and inability to travel into Ashford. Closing the centre entirely would mean more clients are unable to access our support fully.”**

## RAY ALLEN CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 27 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 48% of those providing a comment noted the centre provided much needed support / services for local families in the area and 37% commented the centre is essential / seen as a lifeline.
- Comments referenced the good facilities provided in relation to the alternative(s) proposed (22%).
- 26% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on the community and 19% expressed concerned they will have a detrimental impact on residents' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (27)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Provided much needed support / services for families / children / babies	13	48%
Essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	10	37%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	6	22%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	6	22%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	5	19%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	3	11%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	2	7%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	1	4%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	4%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere /insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“There are many people who have been affected by the continued closure of the Ray Allen Centre. There is no local drop in for those with pre-school children and no advice centre for young mums which there once was.”**



**“The centre is a crucial hub for the Stanhope community,. This is one of the most deprived areas of Ashford where Children’s Centre support can have an amazing impact on young people, The community have suffered since the centre ‘temporarily’ closed due to Covid. We’ve been eagerly awaiting its reopening only to hear now it’s been earmarked for closure. It’s unacceptable to expect our poorest residents to pay bus / taxi fares to reach alternative provision at the Willow Centre. Stanhope deserves and needs its own children’s centre.”**

**“The Ray Allen Centre was our closest centre and closed several months ago. We were led to believe that this building would be replaced and services re-established. There is no Children's Centre in Stanhope now, which is one of the most deprived areas of Ashford.”**

**“Hugely. It would be a massive loss. It’s been a hub for twins and multiples meeting for many years and without it my life would have been much harder. My mental health would have been severely impacted without this centre.”**

**“The closure of the Ray Allen centre has been very difficult: prior to the closure I spent a lot of time seeing clients and running groups out of the Ray Allen Centre. Its closure has meant that we no longer run the young people's domestic abuse group in Ashford as we don't have a venue to use. This means YP in Ashford miss out on this service which often has enabled them to feel confident and comfortable accessing other groups run out of the Ray Allen Centre. The closure of the Ray Allen has also impacted on young people engaging with my service - they often struggle with anxiety and the Ray Allen is the closest centre to them, they have struggled to attend other centres. Given the majority of our referrals come from social services or early help this has also impacted on joint working with these agencies.”**

**“It has been closed for so long now but was a lovely building that the library could have moved in to as well as a gateway and space wouldn’t be an issue. Neither would the anti-social behaviour that currently happens outside the library on the ball court where all the kids hang out. Unfortunately, now it has been empty for so long, the building wouldn’t be able to be utilised this way. I'm worried that combining two more services into the Stanhope Library would be very cramped, especially as the only space it has is the carpeted area downstairs, the large community room belongs to Moat housing as it is their building and the library rents space from them.”**

**“The South Ashford area includes three wards with an IMD score over 20. The Ray Allen Centre in Stanhope has successfully provided a range of services to support these more deprived communities. Since the commencement of the Stanhope PFI, crime in the area has reduced dramatically and the improvement at the John Wallis Academy has seen it move from a failing school to good and an outstanding rating for the nursery. The Ray Allen Centre has played a pivotal part in these achievements, itself rated as outstanding by Ofsted in 2012. As a valued and well used community resource staff at the centre have coordinated multi-agency support for vulnerable families, delivered improvements in parenting skills, including teenage parents which have helped children’s development that supports improving their educational outcomes. As a result of various activities and links with other professionals there was a fall in the proportion of children with communication difficulties, an increase in participation in physical activity and healthy eating activities contributing to reducing obesity. With adult education offers on site, and use of a crèche for children, adult literacy and numeracy improved, leading to increased confidence as parents developed additional skills that help to secure employment.**

**Users of the Ray Allen Centre have found long term friendships which were particularly important for new families to the area in reducing isolation. The community garden was highly valued as a resource that was open to all providing a safe open space. As well as young families, other groups used the centre, for example a lunch group for older people who themselves supported the centre through making items, such as story sacks, for use in activities with the children. Greater clarity is sought on whether the proposal to provide a family hub at Stanhope Library is intended to replace the provision of a new Ray Allen Centre and if so we question whether the library offers suitable premises to maintain and enhance the scope of these services to Stanhope and the wider South Ashford community.”**

# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - CANTERBURY

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Canterbury.

### JOY LANE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 47 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 60% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 51% comment that it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (40%).
- 38% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (47)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	28	60%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	24	51%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	19	40%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	18	38%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	12	26%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	9	19%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	8	17%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	6	13%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“We attend stay and play at Joy Lane every Thursday. This group has been a lifeline to me, my children and my mental health. After having a difficult pregnancy and birth during the height of covid with my second child, I couldn't wait to get back to this group with my children. I suffered from bad post-natal depression after my second child and i feel that being able to attend bumps to walkers at Joy Lane, like I did with my first, would have benefitted me so much, but unfortunately the centres did not open in time. I cannot afford to pay for weekly groups for my children so the stay and play session at Joy Lane, which we walk to, is a godsend. My child did not settle well at nursery so this group as part of her weekly socialising.”**

**“Having this children's centre has been so important in getting me and my kids out of the house. We have really struggled, particularly over the winter, because it is too expensive to heat our home and use the electricity so we have been looking for places to go. Discovering these centres has improved our quality of life, giving us somewhere to go where the kids can play and stay warm and interact with other kids. I think, particularly the kids impacted by the covid restrictions over the last few years that have not been able to enjoy normal socialisation, need centres like these to access to make friends, improve their social skills and develop alongside their peers. Were we to lose the stay and play at the Joy Lane centre it would leave a big hole in our week.”**

**“I have close friends and family who use the centre for the children's groups. If Joy Lane Children's Centre closes, Whitstable Youth Hub is a 25 minute walk from Joy Lane which causes a problem for the families that do not drive or have access to a car. A lot of families use this centre regularly who do not drive, this will affect their ability to attend children's groups to socialise - a lot of parents/carers feel isolated and this is their way to socialise with other parents and the staff - if there is not a Children's Centre within walking distance these facilities will not be an option to them anymore, also for midwife and health visitor appointments. It would be a huge shame for the service users if it was decided for this building to be closed.”**

**“We use Joy Lane and Swalecliffe children centres more than three times a week, if these were to close it would have a massive impact on my children as they would have nowhere to go to interact with other children and professionals. They would miss out on learning and development help and overall would impact their day to day life. Myself would also be affected as this is a chance for me as a parent to interact and get advice and help about my child's development, I live alone with no family near so this groups really help me as a mum to talk about any issues I have and help with my children.”**

**“Joy Lane is the closest to the Lucerne Drive estate, an area of dire need. Children from there attend Joy Lane school, which is already a long walk from Lucerne Drive. Bus services from there are scanty and expensive into the town. So closing the Joy Lane centre and transferring services to the Harbour end of the town would seriously impact families on the Lucerne estate. Please reconsider this proposal.”**

**“As a person who lives in an area of deprivation, i know how hard it is to travel. The closest school to that area is on the same site as Joy Lane CC, therefore families are able to access that centre, either by walking or a low cost quick bus journey. Families from that area will be cut off otherwise. Having an outreach on that estate is not enough, they should be entitled to more than just an hour a week. Families from that area struggle with a number of**

things. I have seen from being that Joy Lane CC that the families that come to our centre from that area need our support. People with small children are not able to walk far, or with the current climate people are unable to afford buses, taxis' or even to put petrol in their own car. That area is cut off. People from the local estates access the children centre, they feel welcomed and are 10 minutes away which seems like an easy walk if you are a new mum. If you have to travel 20/30 minutes to a centre, you are less likely to attend and access that support.”

“Please re-consider closing BOTH Children's Centres and relocating to the Youth Hub. New mothers should have a protected, private space (with ample parking!) in order to access baby groups, breastfeeding support and health visitor appointments. Some of these could potentially also be held at the Youth Hub but as long as quality, privacy, ease to get to etc are not compromised. You should not give up your protected space for new mothers, particularly as you could bid for contracts for perinatal health services (such as the new mental health and pelvic health hubs) to be run out of these spaces.”

“This building was the old Joy Lane Junior School it sits on the whole school site behind locked gates. The main school is undersubscribed and has space anyway and for the school to take on this building paying for heat and light is unrealistic. The building can't be sold and would have restrictive use for any group ( Where is the financial gain in closing it you can't sell it so you would have to mothball it, costly and unnecessary). The security and maintenance costs outweighs ruts closure. Think again. The travel time to the proposed Family Hub is unrealistic.”

“The demographics of Whitstable have changed a lot in the last ten years and there are now a lot of second homes and more affluent families - but we must not forget that two of the wards of greatest deprivation in the Canterbury District are in Whitstable. Joy Lane CC has never been in quite the right place - it is midway between the two areas of deprivation (the Lucerne estate and the Grimshill estate) so we have always tried to provide outreach groups on these estates as we recognise that some of the families living there cannot or will not travel. We currently do not have the capacity to run outreach groups in these two places so families are being expected to come to us. If the services we run from Joy Lane are moved to the Youth Hub we will be expecting these families to travel even further. Whilst an extra 1.5 miles does not sound a lot on paper, in reality, it is enough to deter people from walking to it or getting on the bus with their small children. The same applies to Swalecliffe CC - the Long Rock Estate is the area of deprivation and is very close to the centre. Whilst Whitstable Youth Hub is only a couple of miles away it will be enough to deter families from coming regularly. If the service moved to Whitstable Youth Hub changes would need to be made to make it fit for our purpose - this would mainly be in the form of storage for Children's Centre resources. Also a clinic room for health services. The Coastal midwifery team currently use Joy Lane Children Centre all day every day - and have two rooms to run clinics and also do their admin as they have no other base. They would need to be housed in the new Family Hub.”

## SWALECLIFFE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 29 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 79% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 69% comment that it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (34%).
- 24% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (29)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	23	79%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	20	69%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	10	34%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	7	24%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	5	17%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	5	17%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	4	14%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	3	10%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	2	7%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Devastated. We have used this children centre for the last 8 years. It is in walking distance and not easy just to drive to Herne bay for another centre. Why would you close both of the 2 children centre in Whitstable yet leave 2 open in Herne Bay?”**

**“Another group that we use weekly and have really noticed not having it the last couple of months that it has been closed for maintenance. This group was my lifeline when i had my first child, getting out and meeting new people and other mums in the same situation as me. This is a desperately needed centre for services.”**

**“Swalecliffe children’s centre is an amazing service which my children really look forward to every week, they learn new things, interact with adults and children and also really helps develop their education and skills.”**

**“I think it is essential that the building continues to benefit local families and young children. Ideally this would mean a fully open Children Centre, but if not then for the building to be passed to the school to expand their current franchised nursery provision who already use half of the building. There is no separate entrance for the building and so it could not be used for other purposes than either nursery/primary school age children or parent support work. We would be happy to maintain spaces for children centre work to continue to take place on our school site at the same time as part of the agreement if required. Schools need to work with the children's centre services as both parties' benefit, but most importantly vulnerable local families benefit. The key thing is that the building must continue to benefit local families as per its original purpose. It is not simply part of the estate, but an important part of the fabric of our school grounds, and a really important asset to our local community.”**

**“Both me and my child use the services at Swalecliffe. If this was to close this would impact us massively as this centre plays a big part in my child’s development and social skills. It would also impact me as a parent as this is a great place to get adult interaction and advice. Swalecliffe children’s centre is a safe place to take my child, for him to make friend and to get us out of the house. It is an amazing centre and doesn't deserve to be shut down.”**

**“I have used this centre previously for Prenatal appointments, Post natal appointments, Health visitor checks, Baby Groups and Training courses. Looking at increasing my family in the near future I am concerned about losing this facility, (ideally located next to my children’s school) and having to drive in an either pre or post-natal vulnerable state to Canterbury, which is becoming increasingly busy, when I could take a walk to either Whitstable centre. Helping both my mental health and carbon emissions.”**

A petition to oppose the closure of Joy Lane and Swalecliffe Children's Centre has been created and received over 500 signatures. Email feedback received by the KCC consultation team also referenced a survey conducted by parents locally:

**“The timetables at Joy Lane and Swalecliffe are a shadow of what they formally were. In November 2016 there were 26 ½ hours of structured activity at Joy Lane. By January 2019 this had dropped to 19.5 hours of structured activity a week, in March 2023 it was 9.5. Outreach sessions in areas of high deprivation on the Grimshill and Lucerne Estates no longer run and the relocation of the community midwives from both services to Estuary View Medical Centre has led many parents to no longer consider them a place they can just ‘pop in’ for a chat with staff. Whole rooms in Joy Lane Children’s Centre haven’t been reopened and with a limited timetable 1 in 5 of the parents we have survey reported that they had been turned away from services in the last year because of their limited capacity. Limited usage of the current services is a deliberate result of reducing the level of provision and there is no detail as to whether the new family hub will meet or exceed the hours available on both sites combined. Current utilisation figures are an inaccurate measure of need as the pandemic has left many feeling isolated and unable to ask for or seek help. Articles in the British Medical Journal show that the withdrawal of community midwifery services in the pandemic has left many parents to disengage with services because they are unaware of, or unwilling to engage with, support which is available to them.**

**The consultation considers change to be justified if 85% of the population can access the alternatively listed services within 30 minutes by public transport. However we believe that the unwillingness to guarantee 100% of people can access services is because people in areas of greater deprivation will disproportionately suffer. The consultation suggests that parents using Joy Lane could reasonably be expected to travel to both Briary Children’s Centre (5.8miles away) and the Riverside Youth Centre (6.9 miles away). Parents accessing Swalecliffe Children’s Centre can be expected to travel to Riverside Youth Centre/Briary Children’s Centre (3 miles away). We have identified the 14 highest areas of deprivation in Whitstable as identified in the 2021 Census - output areas in which at least 40% of the population have one measure of household deprivation. Using the tool TravelTime we identified a starting point within each area and plugged in the recommended alternate venues they may have to travel to outside of the town. In 6 of the 14 areas residents were not able to travel to the recommended alternative provision listed below within the 30 minutes - not accounting for any delay in the bus or waiting time. We would thereby call on Kent County Council to guarantee that all services will remain in the town and parents will not be expected to travel outside of it.”**



## RIVERSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 42 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 67% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 52% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (31%).
- 31% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (42)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	28	67%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	22	52%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	13	31%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	13	31%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	13	31%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	10	24%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	7	17%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	3	7%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	3	7%
Use nursery / nursery is need	2	5%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	2%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The riverside has been a lifeline for my son and I, being a first time mum and not having many friends with babies, it has meant I have had the opportunity to meet other mums in a similar position. My son loves attending the Stay and Play sessions, I really do believe they have helped him to become more social and develop quicker, as he’s been able to interact**

with other babies. The drop in clinics have also been invaluable, the staff there are lovely and very helpful. We have used them at least once a month and they're always busy when we attend. I really do feel that if services like these are cancelled, then there could be a rise in mental health issues. I found being a first time mum overwhelming and my mental health suffered until I found out about places like Riverside."

"I use riverside the most as it is closest to me. It's important to have the health visitor there and it's close enough that I can be on time to collect my daughter from school when the health visiting clinic ends. I also saw my midwife there, which was easier than the hospital to access. I use the classes there also. If I had to travel further I probably would not attend these clinics or classes, which risks an impact on my mental health."

"Childrens centre was a life saver to me as a new mum - I had the opportunity to meet others, connect and see someone if I needed to. If the proposals get rid of all the Whitstable and Swalecliffe hub's then where will people go? I would not have caught a bus to another town - I would have struggled on my own! Mothers at risk of mental relapse, post-natal depression are not going to have a place that is accessible!! This will have a significant impact on mother and baby mental health."

"Massively impacted - co-locating the current Riverside Children's Centres into the youth centre will likely reduce the space available and therefore the service provision. The clients at Rising Sun rely on the space and services available at the Riverside for emergency safeguarding drop ins, parental support and even discounted meal options. It is a lifeline for many families. I feel that co-locating these targeted, specific services into the youth centre will reduce the effectiveness and reach of the services. Therefore creating yet another barrier for our clients and many others to engage with support services."

"Riverside centre has been a central hub for many years. The building is purpose built and well used and loved. This will be devastating to the community around there because the youth centre does not have the same provision and openness about it. What does it say about the community that a purpose built building specifically for families is to be decommissioned/torn down and land sold off?"

"I have previously worked as a Health Visitor and access to the services provided by Children Centre's are fundamental in meeting key stakeholders objectives in meeting their requirements in relation to early intervention and the healthy child programme. Not having services close to families requires them to travel, at some expense and inconvenience. At this current time of financial hardship, expecting families to find £5.70 to travel to a children centre is inequitable. Health Visiting Service has KPI's to meet regarding attendance to it Universal Offer - this is unlikely to be met if families are expected to travel to a Children Centre outside their area. In addition to this midwifery services are provided from Children Centres - is it fair to expect a mother of a 10 day old baby to travel on the bus for an hour for an appointment? In my experience, I do not want to be over dramatic, but Children Centre's have saved lives of many women and their children. I have experienced women presenting to a children centre, using their attendance as a mean to flee domestic abuse or to seek intervention for their mental health crisis. These women would have been unlikely to seek that help if it was not close to them. I appreciate the need to reduce the financial burden upon KCC and agree with closing one children centre in an area where there are 2 - such as Herne Bay. However, I feel that to leave areas with none will have a significant impact on the health and well-being of children and families. I believe that KCC are short sighted in their approach and are only looking at the pound signs. If children are not able to

**access key services there will be financial burden upon NHS and KCC resources in the future to address the missed opportunities in the fundamental first 1000 days.”**

**“Riverside CC is not easy for us to use as CCs, due to their being only 1 room. This should be seen as our 'flagship' site, but the building isn't fit for purpose due to the limited rooms.**

**The busiest time in the centre is the health clinics. The building is packed. We would really need to consider this if moving over to the youth centre.”**

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## **APPLE TREE CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

- 17 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community. Some also highlighted the convenience of the building location for access.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“We attend stay and play at Apple Tree on a regular basis. Considering the size of the centre, it is always busy and is quite clearly needed for the Chartham village community.”**

**“Valuable in providing groups for Chartham residents to access- support for adults and interaction for children.”**

**“This was the first children's centre I have found and it was such an eye opener to me. It led me to also finding out about Joy Lane which has become a staple in our week. Before coming to Apple Tree I did not know these centres were around and it has really broadened my children's social circle and helped us to get out of the house when we feel that there is nowhere else that we can go, especially now with affordability issues limiting our options.”**

**“All these centres are essential hubs for the community. Their spaces are welcoming - they make you feel safe and supported. The staff get to know you, and you feel like you can reach out if needed. The classes are really well set up and bring families together.”**

**“As a County Councillor I understand what the impact will be from closing the Apple Tree Childrens Centre. This Childrens Centre is in a primary school. It is an ideal location for families to access services. By closing this you will make it harder for families.”**

**“I understand the need to consolidate for costs and carbon footprint. But by closing one centre you increase the carbon footprint, costs for everyone that uses the centre. For everyone sessions taken by a health visitor/early years worker for 8 people attending that would increase car journeys, parking, costs. All the buildings are in towns. Chartham is one of the largest villages with a growing population. It is easily accessible to neighbouring villages. As a centre it could host health visitor appointments, routine maternity appointments and even support with children for children starting school or reception with the skills they need. As a new mum the baby groups have been essential in supporting me to meet people and talk informally about my baby's development. I can't afford bus fares into town and juggle siblings with school pick-ups. The centre is affordable and walkable.”**

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## TINA RINTAIL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 15 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community. Some highlighted that the centre has been closed and this could affect consultation contributions.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“An invaluable resource to its community which provides good value for money.”**

**“We do not use this service anymore but know many friends and family who use it now and will continue to in the future.”**

**“This has not been open as a Children Centre for some time so I feel this may affect members of this community completing the consultation. Young people accessing provision in Hersden have said they would prefer to come to a building.”**

**“Will be an awful loss. We would not have the space and support of so many wonderful staff and courses. This would mean less ability to care for our children and more anxiety and decreased mental health wellbeing.”**

## IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - DARTFORD

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS, HEALTH VISITING AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNSELLING SERVICE

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Dartford.

#### BRENT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

##### Children's Centres and Youth Hubs

- 75 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 67% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 65% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (37%).
- 25% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- 16% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / would be concerned current services would still be available to them.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (75)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	50	67%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	49	65%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	28	37%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	19	25%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	14	19%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	12	16%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	10	13%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	9	12%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	8	11%
Proposed library is not a suitable alternative	6	8%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	1%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“All of these centres are needed by the local community. As a manager of a national charity it is essential that people are able to access these services without having to travel long distances.”**

**“Some midwife/newborn baby checks are run here. This centre is accessible with the many busses running to and from the town centre. When you have a newborn, it can be hard to get out and about. Some members of the public do not drive and would otherwise not be able to get to these services.”**

**“People will lose access to a central facility and instead be forced to use inappropriate co-located services elsewhere in the borough and more than likely be put off using them completely.”**

**“They will lose access to the facility as the proposals are to move the services to an inaccessible location. This centre is in the middle of Dartford, in walking distance from housing and the town centre, near bus stops and the station.”**

**“This will have a devastating impact on our most vulnerable, hard to reach families who rely on support. The ability to work with a team member face to face is essential to some of our parents who would be lost without this. Children's lives will be impacted if these community hubs for children close.”**

**“I am a single mother with a 6 month old. I have moved to the area in august 2022 alone. I have no friends/family in the local area and heavily rely on weekly baby groups/music group and stay and play and baby massage sessions. This has given me a sense of belonging and I have seen a huge development in my child. I have made new friends and my mental health has improved. I have attempted to join Oakfield but public transport is inconvenient and buggy storage is not safe and clean (outdoors), it is a 25 minute walk from town which is not suitable for my child. I have made good friendships and have received excellent support from staff. It would be a shame to have this removed from all mums but especially me and my child after already having a difficult transition. I am happy and settled and look forward to groups, maybe a little more than my baby. It would be devastating to have Brent closed as all my support network would be lost.”**

**“The Brent Childrens Centre on Overy Street is located in a ward which has a deprivation rate of 33% as measured by the most recent census. It is situated in an area of high population and population growth, close to Town Centre with good public transport links. It is there one of the most accessible centres within Dartford. Dartford has a rapidly growing population – increasing at three times the rate of the national average. The closure of this centre will leave a significant area of Central Dartford without a dedicated Children’s Centre. This will place huge pressure on the proposed Community Hub facility at Temple Hill – a location we also have significant concerns about.”**

**“Location! Location! Location! The Brent Children’s Centre is in the heart of the town, it has a high footfall with a vast local community. I appreciate that the building is not owned by KCC therefor an unnecessary overhead. The suggestion that it be closed but the families can go to Temple Hill Library/Hub which is up a large hill if walking from central Dartford. or Oakfield Children’s Centre just doesn’t make sense. Temple Hill library is extremely small. It is in a nice location if you live on ether Temple Hill, The Bridge of Phoenix Quarter. However, to use the library as hub in place of Brent, Temple Hill and Darenth Children’s Centres along with the Dartford Youth Centre. It is such a small place that I wonder if this building has been looked at personally or just chosen of just from a financial spreadsheet on cost cutting alone. An alternative building in the location of the town area indeed makes sense if is a cheaper option. Keeping Knockhall Children’s Centre when it is only just a few minutes from Swanscombe Centre doesn’t make sense, the footfall and depravation in the Greenhithe/Knockhall area is not as high as in other parts of Dartford. Swanscombe (which is a lovely large centre in the middle of an area of need) I understand keeping Swanscombe. I wonder if Knockhall is being kept as it is a cheaper option rather than keeping a more even placement of children’s centres in Dartford and keeping one in the heart of Dartford. Although the Centre is called Brent is serves the very heart of the town with extremely high footfall and high depravation. Apart from Oakfield Children’s Centre which is right over one side of Dartford district and Swanscombe and Knockhall which are near the bearders of Gravesham district there will be nothing for Dartford central area where footfall and deprivation are high, please could you explain? Has the Temple Hill Library been visited in person to understand it’s suitability as a Community Hub? It is extremely small.”**

## Health Visiting Service

- 40 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (53%).
- 28% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 38% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (40)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	21	53%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	15	38%
Currently provides much needed support / services for families / children / babies	11	28%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	7	18%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	6	15%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	10%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	1	3%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“We see lots of families for drop in weigh clinics and development reviews that live in more deprived areas of Dartford. We have a high level of vulnerable families that just wouldn't travel out to Swanscombe and Knockhall. Knockhall is half the size of Brent and the less space there is the less space we have to deliver our service.”**

**“It is vital that families have a safe space that they can attend for appointments and services. Health visiting were a vital service that kept families safe during the pandemic. We cannot expect families to travel far distances for appointments as this is not feasible, economically and practically. Health visitors also need suitable clinic space and so this is a key consideration in their future set ups.”**

**“Brent Children's Centre is the most central town centre site - health visitor services being combined with town centre shopping seems to make sense. If this service is removed we**



would like to discuss co-location of such services in another local authority owned town centre building which is used 7 days a week by the community.”

“We will no longer be able to attend the children’s sessions, as the other centres are too far for us to access. If we were to have another child, losing the midwifery, health visiting and breastfeeding services would also make things harder. I have tried to attend other buildings for appointments in the past, but my work and childcare arrangements mean that this is a real challenge. Potentially, this would mean taking holiday time just so that my husband or I could look after our older children whilst the other parent took the younger child to the appointment. Having a central location means that it is easier to combine tasks and fit them into the day.”

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## GREENLANDS CHILDREN’S CENTRE

- 28 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 32% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 16% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / would be concerned current services would still be available to them.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (28)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	15	54%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	12	43%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	11	39%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	7	25%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	6	21%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	6	21%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	5	18%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	11%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This is a local children’s centre & serves many residents in Darenth providing vital access to midwives & for socialising, if this is closed access to other locations could be limited.”**

**“We provide care for a caseload of over 250 women in this building , antenatal appointments through 40 weeks of pregnancy . We serve women in the da2 6 , da2 7 and da2 8 . The proposed distance to Knockhall and Oakfield would impact their accessibility to care . This could potentially have a financial impact and /or a health impact if they are unable to attend appointments elsewhere. Plus the suggested alternatives already serve a caseload of that postcode.”**

**“I use this service often, I don’t know any other mothers than the mums that attend this group, without them I’d feel lonely. Money is also tight and many don’t have access to the toys they have at the groups or afford to do anything else with their babies.”**

**“This is the closest centre for me to access health visiting services which is already not within walking distance or easily accessible by public transport, I just won’t bother attending appointments if they are too far away.”**

**“This a quite a remote area, not easy for public transport now the buses have been cut, so how will the local residents get the support they need? It won’t affect my family as we are now all adults but what about those young families in the area.”**

**“My household will not be affected but I am very aware that the residents of Darenth and South Darenth are cut off from the main towns of Dartford and Swanley. South Darenth is further impacted by half of the area coming under Dartford District control and half under Sevenoaks, giving a sense of not belonging to any community. Bus services are poor and infrequent and many roads are country lanes with no pavement. For those residents who do not have access to a car, visits to seek advice and support become impossible.”**

## MAYPOLE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 22 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 32% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 16% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / would be concerned current services would still be available to them.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (22)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	7	32%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	7	32%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	6	27%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	5	23%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	5	23%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	4	18%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	3	14%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	14%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Pregnant women need to be able to access midwifery services easily. They are often vulnerable and need to attend their appointments to check on the health of their baby and themselves. I am concerned that without these local services there could be negative pregnancy/birth outcomes.”**

**“This will have a devastating impact on our most vulnerable, hard to reach families who rely on support. The ability to work with a team member face to face is essential to some of our parents who would be lost without this. Children's lives will be impacted if these community hubs for children close.”**

**“The proposed alternatives are not big enough to house all the health professionals required along with up to 15 mothers / children / prams at one time. The travel for some families would be almost impossible and care would be compromised.”**

**“Maypole is at the very edge of Dartford close to the border with Bexley. The location is a highly residential area and the centre is already co located with a school and nurse on site. Whilst Oakfield is a reasonable distance it does not offer the access and facilities of Maypole.”**

## TEMPLE HILL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 60 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 62% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 47% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users praise the facilities currently offered (32%) in comparison to proposed alternative(s).
- 25% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- 18% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / would be concerned current services would still be available to them.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (60)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	37	62%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	28	47%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	19	32%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	15	25%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	14	23%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	11	18%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	10	17%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	5%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	3	5%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	2%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Temple Hill already has a lovely building for its Children's Centre, it is located in the same building as other services which parents are able to use. Moving the children's centre to the library will have a negative impact on our local community. There is not enough space at the library, there are no toilets or baby changing areas, no safe storage for pushchairs, the**

number of people allowed to attend will decrease due to the size of the venue. No outside space to allow children to experience outdoor play & learning. People trying to concentrate in the library will be disturbed by the groups being held. Services have already been cut at Temple Hill; this community needs more children's services not less."

"This children centre is at easy access to me and my newborn. Closing these buildings would make it inconvenient and less likely for me to access these services. I have found them to be great for my mental health and my developing baby."

"If these services close, there will be a huge knock on effect that I am not convinced have really been thought about in enough depth. Children shape the future we say all the time. If that is true, then we can't be taking the very services away that are enabling them to thrive. These services support their motor skills, social skills and so much more. It also brings parents( many of whom suffer with post-natal depression) out of isolation and creates a space that is positive and social."

"We use Temple Hill children's centre every week. My child is disabled and this is one of the only places he feels able to attend. This cannot be replicated in a library; it is not an appropriate space to replicate what takes place in the children's centre. You say you are keeping the children's centre where need is greatest- in Dartford you are keeping Oakfield, Swanscombe and Knockhall. I don't believe this represents the greatest areas of need in Dartford- you are just keeping the cheapest options. This is completely short-sighted. I don't think anyone at the council making these decisions understands what the Children's Centres provide. This is targeted work which prevents larger and more costly problems from arising. You are trying to fool people by saying it's you will be providing the services from the library but the library is not suitable. It's not a space for children- especially those with additional needs. You are cutting services for vulnerable people. I often hear from conservatives that these services are only used by middle class people anyway- this is short sighted. Children's centres do provide support and assistance for those facing socio-economical hardship but it also supports those with SEND, domestic abuse, mental health issues- which can affect anyone. A councillor told me 'you can't be sentimental about bricks and mortar'- I'm not, I don't care about the building but you will not be providing a service for my son if this is taken away or anyone else in my area who needs support."

"Temple hill is a ward with High deprivation. The current centre is located within a purpose built facility in the centre of the ward. The centre is already co located as a Doctors surgery, Church and Community Cafe are in the same building. the centre has 2 well-appointed playrooms with access to outside space. Regular children's groups are held there in conjunction with other agencies. The building is in the centre of the community with parking access , but easy walking distance for this population. The Childrens centre is already in a building that offers a family hub, with holistic support."

"I am speaking as someone who has worked with the most hard to reach families in Dartford. Whilst I understand that this particular building may not be value for money, there is a need for providing a permanent base for Dartford families to access services. Also closing the nearest centre, Temple Hill in Dartford's most deprived area is another blow. Dartford families will not travel to Oakfield and many will not access services at local libraries as they are not seen as a safe space plus children's centre staff will not be based there for those simply knocking on the door for support eg domestic abuse. This is further isolating the families that need this support the most. Previous outreach has not seen the same footfall as that of the children's centre."

**“The Temple Hill Children’s Centre is currently located at The Living Well - a successful and popular shared space with the GPs surgery, a church and community centre. It has a kitchen, separate male, female and disabled toilets which have adequate space for parents to change a baby. The proposed new location for the Hub at Temple Hill library only has one toilet, which is accessed on request. There is nowhere to change a baby and no obvious additional space for children to play or for parents to meet and socialise or for support groups to be held. We do not feel it is an appropriate location for a Children’s Centre and certainly not an adequate replacement for a popular existing location.”**

Midwifery data for the Dartford area has been put forward expressed concerns at the proposed plans for children’s centres:

**“KCC is proposing to close 4 key Children’s Centres in Dartford: Darenth, Maypole, Brent and Temple Hill. This would leave just three Centres for all the community midwifery care: Swanscombe, Oakfield and Knockhall. The consultation document makes no mention of community midwifery services which would be affected by the plans. The essential healthcare activity provided by community midwives cannot be accommodated by just three centres. Maternal and neonatal health relies on the provision of accessible, regular antenatal care. The plans disproportionately effect people in the most deprived postcode areas who are already at risk of poorer health outcomes. Prior to closures, the 7 centres provide 217.5 hours per week community midwifery care capacity. Following proposed closures, available capacity would be vastly reduced to 112.5 hours. The care activity would need to be accommodated in other buildings, which would not support the wider health and social care strategy for integration. In the Dartford area, there is a high concentration of IMD decile 1 and IMD decile 2 areas. Women and babies from these postcode areas are at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, which is well documented and has driven the development of the ICB Maternity Equity and Equality Plan. Women from these areas are more likely to DNA (miss) appointments, and missed antenatal care increases the risk of stillbirth and other poor maternity outcomes. Forcing women to travel further is likely to increase DNA rates. The average distance will be increased from 2.6km to 3.3km.”**

## THE DARTFORD BRIDGE LEARNING AND RESOURCE CAMPUS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 73 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 53% of those providing a comment indicate the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline to current users. 25% comment the centre provides much needed support / services for users.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (38%).
- 23% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- 16% express concerns safety concerns regarding alternative provisions and the suitability of access of potential users.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (73)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	39	53%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	28	38%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	18	25%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	17	23%
Safe place / alternative venue is not safe / would not use due to safety concerns	12	16%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	6	8%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	5%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	4	5%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	4%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	3	4%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	2%



Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Facilities for disabled adults are a rarity To have a facility in a highly residential area is invaluable. Dartford library cannot offer the same opportunities as a resource centre.”**

**“Youth club at Dartford Bridge is central to children who live here and to parents of those children. Many parents will not be able to take kids to youth clubs if it is re located. Our children will miss out.”**

**“My daughter attends the above youth group twice a week and loves it. She has dyslexia and it affects her ability to make and maintain friends. This youth group has helped greatly with this as it has introduced her to other children she may not have otherwise met. It would affect her greatly if this service was no longer available.”**

**“A lot of us have this on our doorsteps and some won't be able to travel to different locations. If we move to Temple Hill there will be problems with traffic. There are some here with ASD's, the change in location will be too unsettling and cause anxiety.”**

**“I have been coming here since I was in primary school and this is the only place I can have fun and be social without worrying. All my friends come here. I'd be really upset to see it close. I believe the building should stay open to help more young people to break out of their shell and feel safe here. Also, so many kids only learn social skills because of this sort of club. It's the only one local. We've got great friendships to feel safe with staff and other people. It wouldn't be the same as another youth centre.”**

**“It will be inconvenient for my child to attend another building. He will therefore miss out on the youth hub he currently attends if Dartford Bridge moves to another building. My son has a really enjoyable time at the youth hub it will be a real shame if this closes. The people who work at the youth hub in my opinion are amazing and great with the children doing an outstanding job and working hard. We could not be without this hub or the people.”**

**“I think the Youth centre should stay where it is because some children do not have a youth centre to go to that make them feel safe and this youth centre does that. I feel like if the youth centre is moved some children may not be able to get there or feel comfortable moving location. It is also easier to travel to from our homes and when finishing at such a late time some people may not feel safe travelling in the dark. Temple Hill is not the safest place so I feel it is a better idea to keep the location of this youth centre where it is.”**

**“I think the youth centre on the Bridge is perfect as young children that live on the estate have this hub to go to where they are safe and close to home. If the hub moves to Temple hill they won't have many to places to go as parents will not want their children walking through Temple Hill to get there. Temple is not safe as the bridge estate this would increase potential danger to young people attending.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Oakfield Childrens Centre. 3 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about closures and the impact this would have on getting children 'nursery ready' and proposed co-locations with Brent and Temple Hill closures in particular.

Accessing safe and warm spaces and needing separate sessions for parents of children with disabilities or SEN is considered important.

## IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - DOVER

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS, HEALTH VISITING AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNSELLING SERVICE

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Dover.

#### BLOSSOM'S CHILDRENS CENTRE

##### Children's Centres and Youth Hubs

- 131 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 74% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 59% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (41%).
- 37% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (131)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	97	74%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	77	59%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	54	41%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	48	37%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	38	29%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	31	24%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	28	21%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	28	21%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	22	17%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	19	15%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	14	11%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Blossom’s Children’s Centre is somewhere that I have visited and used A LOT since my first born in 2019. I am very familiar with the centre and the services in which it provides. I have visited the centre 1-2 a month, and I’d also like to mention that my children attend the nursery inside of Blossoms. Removing this centre would impact not just my family, but hundreds of others who I know also disagree with this proposal. It is easily accessible, for a start. It holds a wide range of services from health visiting to children/baby groups. We already lack things like this in the county, especially Deal/Dover area. And now you want to remove a permanent, stable facility and make it more difficult for people to access by co-locating and constant moving of these services? It doesn’t make sense. I’m sorry to hear that the government is running out of money but I do believe there are more important factors out there than could be looked into / removed, rather than affecting the young lives of our children and making it more difficult for parents/carers..”**

**“Blossom Children’s Centre is a short walkable distance from my home and as I don’t drive that means I can frequently attend sessions at the centre. It moving to the Youth Hub will mean further to walk or the need to get the bus. I know the centre is a safe environment for me and my child, making us both feel relaxed and able to enjoy activities and use services like the HV (features like the manned reception, door locks/secure entry system, additional locked internal door to access rooms, etc.). I am not confident the same level of safety and security could be achieved at the Youth Hub and I would not feel comfortable using space that is shared with young people, particularly those who have behavioural issues, complex support needs or youth offenders. The children’s centre has certain features like heated floors that I doubt could/would be replicated in the Youth Hub turned Family Hub. The heated floors help ensure a comfortable environment for babies and their parents/carers, especially as so much time is spent on the floor or at a low level. We wouldn’t have been so comfortable doing baby massage without this, or during the baby groups. The centre is also an incredibly colourful and stimulating environment, with bright posters and children’s artwork on the walls; it feels like it belongs to the children – it’s their space and they can explore/experiment/express themselves freely and safely there. The Youth Hub turned Family Hub would not be able to replicate this as to accommodate all age ranges the space would need to be kept almost like a blank canvas, with age/group appropriate decoration/equipment etc only being brought out/uncovered for specific sessions.”**

**“Blossoms provides a good local service to Walmer, especially Mill Hill. Its location adjacent to a state school suggests an opportunity to make use of it still as an educational asset while maintaining the health visiting and classes. Due to its location and access it’s not suited to other uses very easily. While Deal is not far on paper - for those with very**

young children the bus service is poor and much less accessible in comparison to a relatively shorter walk to Blossoms. New family homes are currently being constructed at volume on the outskirts of Walmer, likely to increase the 0-5 population significantly in the next five years.”

“Enormously. I cannot state strongly enough how devastating the impact of the closure of Blossom would be. My children have both developed enormously through the social interactions provided to them through the baby and toddler groups at Blossom. This was never clearer than when the first lockdown hit and I witnessed first-hand the "backward" step my son took due to the sudden loss of interaction with his peers at 18 months old. The outgoing, confident and 'clever' child becoming timid and reserved due to lack of interaction with peers. Blossom stepped in again to save the day with the amazing Nursery which would also no doubt be lost, Brambles, housed within the Blossom centre. Economically it was a huge stretch for us to pay for childcare. We struggled with this but did so for our children's benefit but if the groups had been available it would not have been necessary. It was done purely due to the absence of groups. So many parents will not have that option, not the financial positioning to pay for the paid for children's groups locally. The cost of travel to Dover will be exclusionary and so these children will not have the educational benefits of play with peers, nor the opportunities for help which come from parents being permitted a forum to express their concerns. My partner is autistic but will utilise groups with our daughter within the locality. He does not drive and is disabled by public transportation. In short, he will be excluded in a way which is tantamount to discrimination.”

“I don't often do surveys but i have felt nothing but disappointment with our council to even think about closing Blossoms in Deal. It is a lovely new building, great facilities, great staff, my little girl absolutely loves going there, one of her first words was 'Blossoms'. It's a great community where kids can socialise and learn new skills from each other. The thought of going to an overcrowded centre and online services, we won't even bother with it just like a lot of people we have spoken to. Blossoms have benefited a lot of children from around the area, with increasing population around the Walmer / Deal area the council want to shut down centres just like they did with Walmer School. A nice new building, wanting to 'save money'. Think about all the money you have wasted building them not to use them. It really is disgusting.”

“I use Blossoms for baby groups which are so important for the wellbeing of myself and my baby. I've used Blossoms in the past for parenting courses, adult education and the nursery that shares the building. If you remove Blossoms you remove invaluable support for me and my children, I have a disability and I've received years of support from Blossoms.”

“This centre is a lifeline to families with young children. I attended the baby and toddler groups with both of my children when they were young, and my now 8 year old is autistic and struggling with his mental health. The children's centre are still providing support and advice for him. They are working on building his confidence and self-esteem. Without this service, I dread to think where he would be with his mental health. As a parent to very young children, the baby and toddler groups provided much needed socialisation for both my baby and me, during a time I found very difficult due to anxiety and depression. The staff are so friendly and supportive and provide such a nurturing environment and provided easy access to advice from health visitors. I honestly believe it would be extremely damaging to our community and society as a whole if our children's centre were to close.”

**“I’ve used this centre a lot through my pregnancy and my son’s early years. It’s well located for me and a nice venue with friendly approachable staff. I wouldn’t want to lose the centre to have to travel to Dover or nearby, it wouldn’t be cost effective. An outreach service like in a village hall etc, offering the services Blossom offers would not be as private or professional.”**

**“New houses already approved KCC mean many more children in Walmer need localised services. Swathes of new housing and growing populations desperately need this LOCAL vital service.”**

**“You are closing a centre in a town which is expanding. I have taken my son there to be seen when I struggled to see a GP. The more support families can access in the early years would mean less support later on. Ultimately saving KCC money. The funding and service cuts to children’s services has already had a drastic negative impact and KCC are wanting to cut more services.”**

**“I would say the building is one of the most suitable in Dover area for a family hub model. Numerous rooms, space and booked out almost all of the time, groups and services are busy and the only centre with a bespoke garden which would be a shame to lose.”**

**“We strongly urge Kent County Council to reconsider the closure proposal for the following reasons: 1) Blossoms Children’s Centre contains a day nursery, primary school and Sure Start centre on a single site, giving comprehensive cover for families in Warner. The alternative provision is either not available, or located at some distance, which requires a bus ride (if available), and the manhandling of a pram on and off a bus. 2) Moving the facility to the Deal youth hub, fails to consider the differing needs of 0-8 year olds and 11-17 year olds. The Deal youth hub consists of a single large room with 3 smaller side rooms for specialised services. There is no room for the younger children on site. The educational material available for 11-17 year olds is inappropriate for younger children. In our opinion it will be impossible to separate both age ranges within a single building given the limited facilities available at the Deal youth hub. 3) Where will the specialist equipment located at the light and sound sensory room, at Blossoms be relocated, as this was only purchased recently. There does not appear to be adequate room to locate this valuable equipment at the Deal Hub. 4) Relocating the Children’s centre to the Deal Youth Hub, will require a baby changing facility to be fitted, is this in the relocation plan? Where will it go? 5) Blossoms hosts a weekly visit from a Health Visitor, where and how will this valuable service be located at the Deal Youth Hub, as it requires a private room for consultations to take place? This would be a list amenity to new parents if it was no longer available. 6) During the holidays when the hub is open to 11-17 year old children, how will baby classes continue? Losing the baby classes or not catering to the needs of 11-17 year olds would represent an unsupportable loss of amenity for the children of the area, in both age ranges.”**

**“The Youth Centre building down in Park Avenue, has one central hall, and a number of rooms off it. It would need a lot of modification to make it suitable for both a children’s centre AND a youth centre. All changes and building works will cost money. I understand you do have money for modifying buildings, but with the population growth in Deal, maybe you should consider leaving Blossom AND providing a smaller children’s centre in Deal. Particular problems with sharing spaces at the Youth centre will occur in the holidays, when the youth workers have a full program of activities for teenagers. What happens to the children’s centre programs then with the large entrance space? Where are the teenagers to meet?”**

## Health Visiting Service

- 91 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 52% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 48% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (42%).
- 19% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (91)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for families / children / babies	47	52%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	44	48%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	39	43%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	38	42%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	19	21%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	17	19%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	17	19%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	15	16%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	10	11%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	7	9%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	7	8%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Blossoms is ideal for parents living in Deal to access a HV face to face. Not every parent drives and to be honest the transport isn't the best and services have been cut. It's**

**important to be able to access a HV face to face and taking blossoms away from the parents in deal would be detrimental to the service.”**

**“Midwife appointments are held here; you can get advice easily - it is vital to the people of Deal. It is the only Children's centre located in Deal in which you can have midwife appointments and health visits. I use it regularly.”**

**“Having health visiting services locally is invaluable. If people have to travel further for weighing clinics, advice and general appointments, they may be unable to attend due to travel costs. This is unacceptable. These services NEED to be accessible. It is unbelievable that it is even a consideration to close children's centres and limit access to health visitors.”**

**“As a new parent having Blossom Children’s Centre in Deal with regular sessions is vital for my mental health and being able to take my baby to these sessions to socialise and also get advice. You have just invested in an amazing sensory room here also only to threaten to close it. The logic isn’t there. You will be cutting us off from support groups in a town we are comfortable visiting.”**

**“I do not understand who you are planning to try to put different services all in one place but are planning to close a building that already has a lot of the services in one place. The health visitors helped me when I had post-natal depression but it took a lot of courage for me to go there and ask for help and I don't know if I would have been able to do that if I would have had to take a bus/train 8miles to another town first in order to do that.”**

**“It is a safe, clean and professional environment which provides privacy when speaking to the HV. I've attended a community HV space today and didn't feel I could talk about my private and emotional wellbeing due to being in an open room.”**

**“The Health Visiting service is extremely popular in this community. Due to its proximity and walk-in availability, the service that runs from 9-11:30am has a constant flow of babies and parents. These babies are weighed and receive a general examination by Health Visitors whilst parents receiving advice from breastfeeding, weaning, sleeping etc. The face to face interaction allows Health Visitors to take action upon any signs of mental health or domestic abuse. This takes a huge pressure of the NHS. If the Health Visitor service is moved out of Blossoms, parents would be discouraged to make the journey. Blossom offers a safe environment and is accessible to many without the hassle of public transport, parking or traffic.”**



## Children and Young People's Counselling Service -

- 57 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 52% of those providing a comment noted they use the centre frequently / it is seen as a lifeline (for counselling and other services) and 51% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- 32% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (21%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (57)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use centre frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	32	56%
Currently provides much needed support / services for families / children / babies	29	51%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	18	32%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	12	21%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	9	16%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	9	16%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	7	12%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	7	12%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	7%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	4	7%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	5%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“I was unaware of this service but believe there is a great need for this during post covid. The mental health impact lockdown has left a lot of children needing this service. Again, regardless of what building, the service needs to be accessible for the community.”**

**“Counselling services are imperative. If we don’t have this or the offering is reduced people will suffer.”**

**“We will be devastated to see it go. Knowing that the building and staff are there as a safe space if we have any concerns or need support has been invaluable during our son’s first year.”**

**“No support , affecting one’s mental health further increasing post-natal depression anxiety socialisation of babies and children’s affecting development and milestones.”**

**“You will be cutting people off from using services, from socialising and finding somewhere to go and meet new people. After lockdown we need to build our community up, not tear it apart by removing more services.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Deal Library. 18 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about the potential loss of the sensory room at Blossom Children’s Centre, the centre being considered safe and secure, access to alternative transport, new development in the area and the established relationships with staff. An attendee commented that as it is a small building, it is ideal to take deaf child to as it's small and less overwhelming than bigger centres.

## SUNFLOWER CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 40 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 63% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 58% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (48%).
- 43% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (40)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	25	63%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	23	58%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	19	48%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	17	43%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	12	30%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	9	23%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	6	15%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	3	8%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	8%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	5%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The Sunflower Children's Centre serves the local community of Elvington, an area of high deprivation. A Children's Centre in this locality is an essential lifeline for many struggling local families. Travel, even to the nearest villages is increasingly difficult as a consequence of the recent cessation of bus services.”**

**“My daughter and I visit the Sunflower Centre every week. They really have been an integral part of her development so far. The groups are always full of engaging activities and the staff are always on hand for advice or just a friendly chat when you need support. When possible The team take on board the individual requests of the children for activities. We both look forward to our visits and miss them in the holidays when they don’t run. We don’t always have access to a car so will not be able to access the groups if they are moved to the town. All of the staff at sunflower are absolutely amazing and it would be a massive shame for the local community if the centre was too close. From the moment you walk through the door at sunflower and are greeted, you instantly feel welcome and at ease, which is really important for any parents who may feel nervous about attending groups. When I first started attending the groups I didn’t know anyone there, but we have made friends with lots of the other parents and children. Please don’t take sunflower away from our community.”**

**“Hugely. We go there at least 3 times a week, unless ill. It has helped me emotionally so much after having my daughter. It is a safe haven somewhere we feel safe and secure. It's a support network we wouldn't and many others in the village wouldn't have without it. There's nothing else there for us. Public transport is awful. It is good for our mental health. Not to mention how amazing it has been for our children, they are growing and learning so much from Sunflowers. Please reconsider. Look elsewhere.”**

**“I know myself and friends use this provision for their children. I travel to this location as my daughter enjoys the safety and environmental of this centre. My friend loves in the village and finds it a quick walk to access this for her son. The staff at this centre are amazing and attempt to encourage others to attend this centre but I've found that the advertising for this centre and that people are able to access children's centres out of their area are limited.”**

**“Sunflowers Children Centre is able to provide services and support to a very remote area. Currently Elvington/Eythorne has one bus a week go out to the villages so it is not an easy option for families to travel to another centre as you're proposing, this could really exclude people who do not have other forms of transport and stops them from accessing vital services for them and their children. I strongly disagree with the possibility of it closing. I write this with my sister in mind who lives in Elvington and is currently pregnant, she does not drive. She has recently been made aware of the current activities and groups and is hoping to access these once her child is born in the summer. Again if sunflowers closes she would really struggle to find somewhere else or to travel to another children's centre.”**

**“Without this even with the most groups aimed at mother and babies, my ASD child would have nothing as only group can get too due to transport or non pathed roads making accessibility high priority when considering removing. Also able to talk to friendly non-judgemental staff about everyday issues or other services that could help. Without them myself and children with ASD would be left in most vulnerable state and would be left with nothing and be forced into a more isolated situation.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, an engagement event took place at Sunflower Children’s Centre. 9 people attended.

- Concerns were raised about ability and distance to travel to alternatives and/or outreach, the quality of local transport and the importance of the service given to the local community to date.

# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS – FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Folkestone & Hythe.

### HAWKINGE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

#### Children's Centres

- 48 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 71% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 69% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (33%).
- 33% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (48)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	34	71%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	33	69%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	16	33%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	16	33%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	12	25%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	8	17%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	8	17%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	7	15%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	5	10%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	2	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“A devastating blow to new mums in Hawkinge. That centre gave me a reason to get up each day, i attended several groups there each week with both my children, I would not have done this is I had to of travelled. Getting to Folkestone isn’t the answer to this. New mum suffering depression isn’t likely to get a bus if they can’t drive. Devastating to Hawkinge to lose a great facility.”**

**“By not being able to walk to your local centre which serves the town of approximately 10,000, then being forced to ever use public transport or to drive a 5 mile round trip to another centre in another community which will increase the demand in that centre therefore decrease in the availability of appointments and sessions delivered. Absolute insanity!”**

**“You cannot underestimate the impact on people without transportation as a result of closing this building. Currently a community midwife makes use of it which was a wonderful way to introduce me to services provided there. Equally this centre is used by people in the rural community. Every activity I have gone to here has always been full and so I would be amazed to see how those services could be redistributed without more people missing out! People with limited or no transportation will be impacted greatly.”**

**“Closing this centre will reduce the councils individual carbon footprint but massively increase the counties! Rather than have a small number of staff attend the site the whole community would need to travel somewhere much further away. Public transport is barely an option for this area as it’s u reliable and takes an unreasonable amount of time. It’s taking your carbon footprint away and increasing a while communities which needs to be calculated it’s a poor excuse. The negative effect this will have on the mental wellbeing of the vulnerable children in this area is unnecessary and unacceptable.”**

**“Hawkinge is a town and needs services. It is growing, so why remove services? We would struggle to reach Folkestone at appointment times as the services are not all on the bus route and travelling with small children is difficult if there are health worries.”**

**“Again these are a huge part of my daughter week, we attend 2+ classes a week and they are times where she can be with other children playing and learning, they’re massively important for her development.”**

## Health Visiting Service

- 33 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 64% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline. 36% comment that it provides much needed support / services.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (39%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (33)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	21	64%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	13	39%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	13	39%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	12	36%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	6	18%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	5	15%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	12%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	3	9%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	2	6%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This is the most important for us personally. We rely on these groups for company, learning and development. They have been a huge part of my life since having my daughter and I believe they bring structure and enjoyment to a lot of mums in our local area. We would be lost without this facility.”**

**“When I was pregnant, the midwife appointments were local to Hawkinge. This not only helped with the practicalities (when at RVH I had to park a distance away and struggled to walk to the appointment), but also allowed me to meet other local parents. The children’s**



**groups in Hawkinge are fantastic and help build the community of young parents. It would be such a shame if we all got grouped together in Folkestone because fewer friendships would continue outside the groups.”**

**“This centre was a lifeline when I had new-borns. It was a hub for new parents in the community. It will be a huge loss to our town.”**

**“If you close Hawkinge children's centre I won't be able to take my daughter to her Friday session. Until lockdown hit I was taking her to 3 sessions a week there. I loved that I didn't have to drive or get a bus anywhere else and this worked so well for me with a child under 6 months. I'm now pregnant with my second and am so happy that I can have midwife care where I live rather than being forced to have to go to Folkestone. I also know I have 2 sessions I can take my new baby to without having to travel. I have made friends both with people who work at the children centre in Hawkinge and other mums who have attended there. Those mums live in Hawkinge so I can meet them. I have used the Folkestone children's centres but never found them as nice as the Hawkinge one. There are so many mums and dads in Hawkinge, you would really be taking from us by closing the Hawkinge centre. We would be so impacted if you closed it as I don't think I would feel like taking either of my children to a different centre. The ease of just walking to my centre in my town rather than having to factor in all the time to have to go to Folkestone and get to the centres there.”**

**“You state that part of your decision making process was driven by reducing carbon emissions. How on earth does closing a centre in Hawkinge that people can walk to, which forces them to make a 5 mile round trip = reducing emissions. Absolute jibber jabber. Denying our community the facility to visit a local centre is not acceptable.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Wood Avenue Library. 11 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about ability and distance to travel to alternatives, the local area having a high level of need and what potential outreach solutions will look like.

## LYDDLE STARS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 40 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 70% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 40% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).
- 30% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (40)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	28	70%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	16	40%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	12	30%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	12	30%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	10	25%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	9	23%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	7	18%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	7	18%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	4	10%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**"I think the closure of Lyddle Stars Children Centre could have a devastating effect on our son. We currently come twice a week to the centre to join in the activities and socialise. Although New Romney offer more sessions we don't go as it is always quite busy sessions. My son is autistic and doesn't tend to do well in busy classes, which is why Lydd has been so perfect for us. The staff are lovely and know him so well and he's able to safely explore without becoming overwhelmed. I think pushing Lydd and Dymchurch into New Romney is**

**a mistake as you will create sessions that will need to be booked, meaning many will miss out or like myself just unimaginable for my son to attend.”**

**“Lydd children centre gives me a reason to get out of my house. If the building closes I am worried about my mental health it can impact on.”**

**“Even though this centre is a part time centre, more and more families are starting to access the building and services. It is also quite a distance from the nearest centre that is proposed to remain open and this means families are going to have to pay travel costs to get to the centre.”**

**“As a parent, I have used the midwife & health visitor services and consequently parent groups. I have also enjoyed the local community events that the children’s centre have organised. As a Teacher at the adjoining school, we have a close working relationship with the children’s centre, who play a vital role in supporting the parents of our Nursery children. As a deprived area, it is vital these services remain open for those that live locally and who need to walk to these services, because the effort, cost and logistics of a parent taking a child in a buggy or other on public transport to an outreach centre or similar is just not feasible.”**

**“Massively. The groups/support in the area are next to none without the children's centres. The staff have become a part of the community who people trust and feel they can approach for help/support/understanding. Without the Centre there would be no groups for me to attend with my socially deprived toddler (due to lockdown). We rely on these groups for his social development, interaction and entertainment. I rely on them for peer support, expert help, signposting and a sympathetic ear when needed. These centres provide such a huge lifeline to EVERYONE in the community from all walks of life. They are a safe place, a social place, a helpful place and so much more. Without them we will literally have nothing locally for our children and parents. The maternity and child health clinics that run from the centres are invaluable, without them you would find many families disappear or fall through the cracks as they are vulnerable and it takes a lot to attend, if they have to catch a bus or taxi it probably wouldn't happen. Money is short for everyone right now and if it's a choice between feeding your children or paying a bus fare then the children would win.”**

**“Since reopening from lockdown the figures for families attending the centre have increased greatly, people are making good friendships and the children are happy and confident in the environment that we are providing to them. We have one child who is Autistic and he has become so confident and is developing because of the environment, he is aware of his surroundings and mum does not have to worry about him hurting himself as he now has a routine when he attends the groups. Some of these families do not drive or are able to get public transport to other centres due to bus routes and the amount of buses running being cut. This will have a huge impact on the development of these young children who come here before starting nursery, they have now got friends that they will go through the school journey with together. Parents are getting to meet other parents that live nearby and arrange social meetings and without Lydd'le stars this will not happen. One parent who has a 4 month old said this centre is the only place they can come and be with other people that are going through the same journey as them and without it they will have no one.”**

**“Lydd'le Stars has only been allowed to open on a part-time basis since the end of lockdown. This has resulted in restrictions on the number of groups delivered, and services**

accessing the buildings. Many have gone without this vital component in their hour of need for too long. It's time for some investment in this service to this community which has suffered generations of deprivation, has a high SEND need and return to a full-time service. The alternative if it closes is an increased need which will be more serious, have greater consequences and our extensive pressure on other KCC services, particularly Social Services. These families will not travel to other centres but others will travel to it. Although on school site it is completely independent and can lend itself to do many services.”

“This will not directly affect me or my family but to close this Children's Centre will mean that families will need to travel 4 miles to New Romney, which can be impossible and expensive on public transport, especially as Lydd is relatively isolated. If the building needs to close then the services provided need to either be co-located or hire facilities for sessions so that they can be available to local residents.”

“This is the only accessible hub within walking distance. It provides community activities, school holidays activities, as well as health visitor and speech therapy support, in addition to midwifery support. If this was lost, the children of Lydd would be so impacted. My child would have no activities within walking distance and for free. Even if using a car that would still cost at least £4 to travel to New Romney the only planned centre to leave open for a community which covers 100 square miles of Romney Marsh, as also planning to close Dymchurch. How on earth do you think one centre will ever the capacity for that number of children?”

“There is very little help for anyone in Lydd. The public transport is inadequate and unreliable. It is very difficult to use public transport to access services anywhere else. If services are cut in Lydd families who don't own cars may be unable to access children's centres altogether. This means they may not be able to improve their understanding of their children's health, wellbeing and development. It would have a negative effect in the mental and physical health of families in the area.”

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, an engagement event took place at Lydd’le Stars Children’s Centre. 30 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about the potential lack of safe and suitable venues for outreach (Lydd library is perceived to be too small for example), the location of the centre to current users, the importance of the outdoor space the centre offers, concern about parking and space at New Romney and concern about local public transport.

## DYMCHURCH CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 28 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 68% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 64% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (25%).
- 25% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (28)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	19	68%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	18	64%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	7	25%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	7	25%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	5	18%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	4	14%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	11%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	2	7%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Hugely, my daughter and I visit regularly, meeting other friends there. The baby groups we attend are hugely important for both my daughter’s development and my mental well-being. Being able to have time with likeminded people and be out the house is a saviour for us.”**

**“This is our closest centre. Not having access to this would put me off using the service at all. It’s very central and convenient to the local people.”**

**“It is the families in need of support in the Dymchurch area who will feel the biggest impact, this has been the case for many years now, there are not enough services offered at Dymchurch for families to engage in and therefore they do not register. There are more and more families being relocated to the marsh and they simply cannot find the support, with many of them unable or unwilling to travel to New Romney or even further to Folkestone. Many of them cannot afford public transport and do not own a car The most needy families are the once who are impacted the most by the loss of children's centres in general without relocating what they do have to even further away.”**

**“My baby would not have social interactions with other children. I am new to this area and already find Dymchurch a very isolating lonely place to live. If I did not go to the Children’s centre. Which I go to all sessions held there weekly. My child and I would not interact with other children/ adults. As an early years trained educator, the importance in early development is social and emotional, it is detrimental to the foundations of children’s life. You see the effects of lock down on speech and language and children’s ability to socialize. By taking away things such as the children’s centre you then create problems elsewhere as there becomes a percentage of children who do not gain this early socialization, being involved in singing (start of speech and language development). My daughter 9 months is very clingy and doesn’t like to be separated from me. Going weekly to Dymchurch Children’s Centre, she has become more confident and seeing familiar faces of people who attend, has really grown in confidence and will happily leave my side and interact with other children and adults. No other place we go does she do this. With no children’s Centre in Dymchurch, a very rural village my daughter will not meet and socialize and I also would be very isolated and lonely.”**

**“Less access to health visitors which should have never been separated from the Doctors surgery. So if you are taking local health care away then put them back in the drs surgery! The early years are the most important years of anyone’s life by taking support and guidance away from people it would be putting many at risk, parenting skills are not always easy and without the correct guidance children would face an uncertain future, especially in a deprived area. Parents need support I am talking as a grandmother who accessed the services when bringing up my own children without the support from health visitors or early years groups I would have struggled.”**

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## FIVE - SHEPWAY YOUTH HUB

- 16 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community. Some highlighted that the centre is needed to provide somewhere for young people to go in the district.
- There appears to be some confusion over the proposed re-location of the service provision.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“I have been going for 6 years and it’s just the best place and taking this away is the worst idea possibly a lot of young people benefit from this service.”**

**“Folkestone Youth Hub should remain open it is imperative for youth in the town to have a hub where they can go for help/advice and support and to access support and youth groups.”**

**“This building is proposed to close. I think the youth service is vital for the young people it serves and their families having previously been a client of this service/centre. I don’t know where I would be without the support, guidance and opportunities of them.”**

**“There are no youth hubs in Folkestone/Hythe District if this is to close. Young people need their own separate space away from children's centres. Placing 0-18 year olds together in one building is not appropriate.”**

**“I feel the move to Folkestone Early Years will be positive as it will give us more outdoor space for the young people using the facilities, but I feel there will have to be some modifications made to accommodate our service.”**

**“The closure of Shepway Youth Hub, as a safe secure place for young people to meet, socialise and where early interventions sessions take place, thereby promoting good mental health and wellbeing replaced with an outreach service. The Shepway Youth Hub building is going to remain open for Early Years use, why can't it continue as a Youth Hub in the evening?”**

- Separate conversations took place with some of the young people aged 9 to 18 who currently attend the Hub. It is estimated that at least 37 young people gave feedback on the consultation in this way.
- There was some positive feedback in that the service will still be available, there could be opportunities for more space / outdoor space and a family hub environment is appealing.
- Some concerns were raised about adjusting to a new setting / environment / change, staff jobs being impacted and not wanting online session formats.

- They expressed a desire for more support regarding mental health / emotional wellbeing, cost of living and finding jobs, and support that is close to home in terms of distance. Some would like to be involved in planning the format / layout of new space and would like to see a welcoming environment that includes notices and space for particular activities (e.g. music, sport).



## IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - MAIDSTONE

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Maidstone.

#### EAST BOROUGH CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 33 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 42% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 39% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (36%).
- 21% comment that the centre could be used by the school or for other activities to keep the centre open.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (33)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	14	42%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	13	39%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	12	36%
East Borough could be used by school or for other activities	7	21%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	12%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	4	12%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	4	12%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	4	12%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	9%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	6%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This is one of the centres I have been coming to since my children were babies. The services they provided got me out the house and out the rut of post-natal depression. I have been coming here for 6 years and if it was to close it would be a huge shame as this isn't far from town and a very good access to it.”**

**“I cannot get to any other children's centres as they are too far to walk to and there are no buses from near my house to get to any of the others. With the cost of living crisis, their free stay and play sessions are an absolute lifeline of engagement for myself and my daughter.”**

**“Every week I attend under 1s stay and play and have since my baby was 5 weeks old. This has been fundamental in me coping as a first time mum as I was able to meet other mums in a similar situation. Every week this is a very busy session so I feel it is disappointing to be losing such a lovely venue that is serving the community well.”**

**“We will not be able to go to there every Monday. This is the only place which my family used regularly in the last 8 years. I moved to the area and I've been friendly welcome. I met new friends in there and I got lots of support. It was our place of meetings with other mums. Now we are not going there every week cause kids are at school but every half term we are using their services. I don't drive, buses don't go everywhere and I can afford taxi to take kids to different children centre. This is the only place in this area and shouldn't be close. You should do more services in here like before pandemic and not shut it down.”**

**“The residents within East Ward will face a long and quite frankly dangerous journey to access the proposed co-located services. Given that it is widely known in delivering public services those at most risk and in most need are often backwards in coming forward to access services these proposals are basically giving up on them.”**

**“Living in Barming, I already have to drive to east borough and pay to park. If this one closes I will have to go all the way to park wood. I did this last week. It was so busy I spent an hour and a half waiting just to have my baby weighed. There was no parking. Why living on this side of Maidstone do we have to drive all the way across Maidstone to the more deprived areas.”**

**“The alternative Children's Centre for East Borough users, as indicated in the consultation document, is Sunshine Children's Centre which is an approximate 27-minute walk from East Borough Children's Centre. The other alternative is Greenfields in Shepway which is an approximate 45 – 48-minute walk from East Borough Children's centre. Whilst both alternative options for East Borough users are more accessible in terms of transport links than Marden, the change is significant. An issue that needs to be highlighted regarding East Borough Children's Centre is its location on the periphery of High Street Ward. Its users are not going to be geographically ringfenced to East Ward. Its service users are most likely to come from High Street Ward which is the most deprived ward in Maidstone borough.”**

**Children's Centre**

- 49 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 70% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 63% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (39%).
- 35% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).
- 29% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (49)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	33	67%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	31	63%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	19	39%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	17	35%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	14	29%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	10	20%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	9	18%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	5	10%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	3	6%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	2	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Marden children’s centre services a rural area with poor transport links (other than the train station). Marden has lots of families, expanding new build housing, pockets of deprivation. Many residents here will not use the proposed Greenfields or Cranbrook hubs if they don't own a car, as they will not be able to get to them and it is not practical for families with young children to catch a bus to these venues. Parents will only use services that they can easily access. I feel strongly that the services offered by Marden children's centre need to continue to be offered in Marden but these could potentially be co-located in Marden library for instance.”**

**“Marden Children's Centre is a lifeline to many parents. Enabling parents to make connections with other parents, get advice, reduce parental loneliness and gain confidence in a relaxed atmosphere. Activities are varied and support holistic development of children under 5. The proposed changes to using Cranbrook's facilities instead, is unrealistic in many cases as this is impossible to reach by public transport - Paddock Wood or Staplehurst are more realistic.”**

**“You are alienating rural communities with little to no transport as it is. You cannot expect poorer families being able to access in the middle of Maidstone without a good transport network in place.”**

**“Removing this children’s centre effectively provides us with no alternative. The centre has been a life saver (literally) for parents in Marden. It has strengthened the community and is an essential service that should be provided for families in Marden.”**

**“It would have terrible effect on the community. My son enjoys going to the stay and play and has previously used the baby massage and under 1 groups. There are limited other groups in the area. Given the scale of house building and people with young children in the area this will be a big loss to the community. Cranbrook is difficult to access on public transport, especially as there is no step free access at the train station, and even by car is about 20 minutes away so not very local.”**

**“Marden is a village with a high need and some villages services were already combined into the Marden centre previously. Many people that access this service do not have access to a car and the new services are located too far away for our unreliable public transport network. If the centre closes you will not access the people that you need to and the service will be impacted with higher cost in the future as needs weren't able to be fulfilled in early years. It is a small building in terms of KCC property assets and I fail to believe this is a carbon cutting exercise - this is just a cost reduction exercise. The centre's opening hours have been rationalised since COVID and this means that the carbon is not being effectively off-set, I would argue that a more intensive use of this site could have notable improvements for Children and would do better to off-set the buildings running costs - particularly if you were able to hire it out for other village users.”**

**“We believe that the KCC document does not make a valid case for that closure, nor does it provide sufficient data/evidence, to support such a closure of the sole Community support service south of Maidstone, in a rural area with an increasing population, particularly of young families and increasing GTT provision, with even faster increases in deprivation (as illustrated within the 2021 Census, which KCC have seemingly not considered important**

data in coming to its conclusions). We urge KCC to take on board and heed the concerns raised in responses to this consultation.”

“It is clear, that no impact assessment has been made to consider how this closure will impact families, and even more so vulnerable families. There is no information on how alternative provision will be provided or indeed what it will look like. The proposal appears to be driven solely by property and not people and the needs those people might have. Marden whilst not the most deprived ward in the borough does have areas of deprivation. In Marden and Yalding ward we have 1249 households suffering from at least one level of deprivation, this represents 32% of households in the ward. There are 585 low-income families with a total of 377 children, 207 of those living below the poverty line. Health inequality data show that Marden and Yalding has higher than the borough average emergency hospital admissions for children under 19 (57 per 10k as opposed to 49 per 10k). The alternatives Cranbrook library (not confirmed) and Greenfield are simply not accessible to anyone without a car. The buses are unreliable, and the train is both expensive and in accessible for anyone in a wheelchair or with a buggy. Marden’s population has grown considerably in the last 10 years and is very much at risk of being earmarked as a future garden community with an additional 2000 houses. The need for a children’s centre is therefore increasing not diminishing, this despite limited opening hours of the existing centre. Closing the Marden Children’s centre would without doubt disproportionately affect the most vulnerable families in the ward and would compound matters in the borough by pushing those families on to the ward with highest levels of deprivation which is Shepway.”

“Marden has an increasing importance as a rural centre and has a growing population as well as an increased and increasing social housing need. The original proposals in the early 2000’s determined an absolute need for a Children’s centre in Marden due to the rising number of vulnerable families this need has not reduced, in fact the needs are increasing because of a growing population. KCC has since the pandemic reduced the opening times of the Marden Children’s Centre, which in itself is limiting the access which vulnerable families have for support. This change has proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, reducing opening time has reduced attendance, because support has been removed. This was a poor decision. The purpose of a Children’s Centre is to reach out and engage with vulnerable families, their newborn and the family element of support. Supporting young mothers with young children (0 to 3) will both identify their early need and encourage and engage regular social engagement so that the young children engage with other children. This has even greater importance since the long periods experienced as a consequence of the Covid pandemic. This also true for the young mothers. These Vulnerable families do not find it easy to either ask for help, or talk to strangers, who they see as ‘in authority’. So, even when they try to reach out, their own anxieties and ‘fear’ will for the large part, stop them from engaging. Reducing access times only exacerbates this problem. There is an equal failure to recognise the link between closure of a Children’s centre and the future increased need for EHCPs for vulnerable children when they start school because their needs as a whole will not have been identified early enough.”

“The report suggests that should the Children’s Centre close then residents would be able to access facilities in Cranbrook or Shepway. Neither of which are easily accessible by public transport from Marden and comes at a cost which is unrealistic for many families. Anecdotally we understand that Paddock Wood has been suggested which is accessible by train, but at a cost as well. Marden Station does not have step free access on the down line, thus making it almost impossible for parents with push chairs to return from Paddock

**Wood by train. From a meeting with a KCC officer we understand that KCC proposes that Outreach services would be delivered to Marden at alternative venues. However publicly accessible venues in Marden are limited and there is no mention in the consultation document that any assessment of availability or suitability that has taken place. There is clearly a need for community services for children and young people in Marden, which is local, responsive, accessible (both in terms of location and opening hours) and meeting the needs of the local population. This is exactly what the Children's Centre has been doing. In the absence of any concrete proposals as to how or where these services could be delivered if the Children's Centre was to close then Marden Parish Council strongly believes it must remain open to deliver the services needed to support our families."**

**"We have identified that Marden residents will be disproportionately affected. The most vulnerable residents in Marden will be most affected. Residents who rely on public transport will have a significant journey time and an additional financial burden. It is likely that residents will choose not to make the journey. Additionally, there are significant access issues at Marden train station – making train travel with a pushchair almost impossible and therefore traveling by car to Tonbridge the only option. We have been informed and therefore have anecdotal knowledge that Tonbridge Youth Hub and Children's Centre is being suggested as a nearest alternative to Marden residents. However, this is not what is included in the Consultation. Cranbrook library is the primary alternative in the consultation documentation, despite the co-location of the Children's Centre not yet being agreed. Greenfields is the secondary alternative for Marden residents. If Tonbridge is a viable alternative, why is it not included in the consultation documentation?"**

**There has been a 55.8% increase in the number of 0 – 4-year-olds and a 23.6% increase in the number of 5 – 9-year-olds. This compares to an overall increase in population in Marden and Yalding of 21.6%, suggesting that the number of 0 – 9-year-olds is increasing faster than the rest of the population. There has been a 16.3% increase in lone parent households. In Marden and Yalding Ward there are 1,249 households suffering from at least one level of deprivation, an increase of 18.5%. Households of this type of account for 32% of all households in this ward. 10% of households in this ward have no access to a car or van for travelling."**

## Health Visiting Service

- 24 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 70% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 63% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (39%).
- 35% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).
- 29% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (24)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	14	58%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	12	50%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	3	13%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	5	21%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	3	13%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	13%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Marden Children's Centre is a lifeline for parents and young children in Marden. Travelling to e.g. Cranbrook is not possible on public transport with a baby. Without Marden children's centre families will be left unsupported.”**

**“We should be able to access more children’s services locally not less by closing this centre you are depriving the local community of a much needed service.”**

**“Removing this children’s centre effectively provides us with no alternative. The centre has been a life saver (literally) for parents in Marden. It has strengthened the community and is an essential service that should be provided for families in Marden.”**

**“We would have to travel a significant distance and spend significant time travelling to access the same services. It would be highly inconvenient. Also, it would be entirely counter-productive to have tens of people driving from Marden to access these services, given that one of the council's stated aims is to reduce carbon emissions. To ignore the increase in carbon emissions from those travelling to access the services would be duplicitous of the council, being generous.”**

**“It would have a terrible effect on the community. This is a vital service and it is important that people can access the services locally. Especially as post c section delivery you are not permitted to drive usually for 6 weeks.”**



# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - SEVENOAKS

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Sevenoaks.

### NEW ASH GREEN CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 61 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 64% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 62% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (43%).
- 43% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).
- 26% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

### Children's Centre

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (61)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	39	64%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	38	62%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	26	43%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	26	43%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	16	26%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	13	21%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	12	20%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	11	18%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	6	10%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“My children and my own mental health rely heavily on the services the Children’s Centre provides. Having had two lockdown babies, the ability to be able to spend time with other children and access much needed resources face to face is beyond important.”**

**“We used and still use New Ash Green Children’s Centre for the past 9 years for all 3 of our children. Unfortunately, New Ash Green and neighbouring villages are pretty much cut off by bus services or trains, therefore making it difficult for families without a car to travel to further out centres you are proposing. New Ash Green is populated by families with children and local Children’s Centre is vital for the villages around.”**

**“This is a local village where people don’t tend to drive. They walk everywhere with young children. This is a lifeline to myself and others. to ask people to travel 8 miles away with a new baby or an active toddler is unacceptable.**

**“My daughter is expecting and does not drive. There is no reliable bus service from New Ash Green and loss of the Children’s Centre would leave her isolated. Therefore it will prevent her from living here.”**

**“My daughter is expecting her first child in August. Previously she would be able to get face-to-face support at the NAG Children's Centre on Tuesday mornings. To suggest that especially with a young baby, that she use Next Steps in Gravesham is ridiculous. There are four buses a day from NAG to get to King's Farm with two buses would be needed each way, four in total. There are no bus services to Dartford and Swanley so that rules all the Dartford and Swanley centres. There is a suggestion of an outreach service, but I have little confidence in such an offer.”**

**“New Ash Green is a family village and having the children centre within the village has a lovely community feeling. I have been visiting the centre for a few weeks now and i wouldn't have known about it If it wasn't for another mum at the primary school. It's a small centre which I feel is a perfect size for little ones to play and develop. It is used by so many families within the village and it would be so sad to see it go. The village hasn't got much going on for children and the centre is the most perfect place for little ones to interact with other children and develop their social needs. It is also nice for mums, dads and grandparents to get together in a happy environment with familiar faces from the area.”**

**“New Ash Green was designed as a self-contained community in a rural location. whilst much has changed in the 50+ years since its inception, the housing mix still favours first time buyers and lower income families. Consequently parts of the village display a markedly lower score on the Index of Multiple Deprivation than most other parts of Sevenoaks District. The rural location of New Ash Green means that access to facilities outside the village is difficult for those who do not have personal transport available at all times. Even the stated 31 minute drive time to the alternative children's centre will put it out of reach of parents who are likely to have a number of caring responsibilities. Recent**

severe reductions in KCC-subsidised and commercial bus services mean that public transport is not a viable option for many purposes. This is acknowledged in the EqIA appendix where it is not that "No households are able to reach another centre via public transport, so households are likely to be reliant on private vehicles and our digital offer." But apart from the offer to consider feedback, no mitigation is offered. For the parents of young children, travel to appointments even as close as Longfield where car parking is limited, is time consuming and impractical when placed alongside other caring responsibilities. IMD and Census data will confirm this. The purpose built premises in New Ash Green are the most convenient for use by families, not only those who live in New Ash Green but also those from Hartley, Longfield and the surrounding area - a combined population of over 17,400 which is greater than the population of Swanley. No other buildings in the area which could be used for the satisfactory provision of outreach services in a safe and effective way have been identified as being available."

"I am particularly concerned about this closure as the nearest alternative suggested in the consultation is the Next Steps Children's Centre in Gravesham which is 8.3 miles away. In good traffic, this journey can be completed by car in less than 30 minutes. However, for parents relying on public transport, it would not be easily accessible as the door-to-door transport time would take in excess of 90 minutes each way. Closures where services are moved to the nearest alternative site will disproportionately affect families who are reliant on public transport and do not have access to a car. Using public transport to get to services is also an added cost for families on low incomes that rely on public transport and who need support services. It is therefore so important that, should KCC close the building, the services currently on offer at the Gravesham Next Steps Children's Centre, be provided at an alternative venue in New Ash Green."

## Health Visiting Service

- 40 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 45% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 40% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (40%).
- 35% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (40)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	18	45%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	16	40%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	16	40%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	16	40%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	14	35%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	8%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development	2	5%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The nearest centre is then over 8 miles away. If anything there needs to be more clinics and groups here. The help from the Health Visitor is invaluable at the clinics and closing this centre would exclude a lot of people from that help. There are now very few buses from Hartley/new ash green, if any at all, as they have all been cut so getting to the next nearest centre by public transport probably isn't an option. New Ash also doesn't have a train station.”**

**“Local community needs the children's centre. It is well used and local young families would really miss it.”**

**“Having seen the impact of development reviews from the Health Visiting Team being conducted online or over the phone during vivid in terms of missed opportunities of early identification of SEND, I am worried that more children will fall through the net. I understand there will be some outreach provision in this area is planned however accessibility is key.”**

**“Children's centres should remain in purpose built environments to best serve children and family's needs, they should also remain within walking distance to families as the most vulnerable families will not travel. Children's centres should remain a safe space for families.”**

**“There is a deprived community here. It will not be able to get to the suggested facility in Gravesend with the poor bus service here. There are better alternatives in the adjacent library (which has land attached), the primary school or, very close by, a very underused youth and community centre.”**

**“Isolated as I walk every day to take my eldest to school then I use the free services provided to socialise with other parents and my child then socialises with children in our local area to make a friendship that potentially will see them through school and pre-school. My eldest got to enjoy this and has made some wonderful friends. I also met new friends who supported me as a new mum. To access health visitors locally without having to drive to Swanley (which is something I will not do). Inflation is rising and people in our community rely on FREE points of access to socialise and let our children play without the cost involved. Covid already cut our regular sessions and now it's potentially being taken away for good! With 2 young children and 1 on the way I'm very disappointed to see my local centre closed. Most people walk to this centre and if we had access to more sessions and days for all ages 0-5 I believe it would be cost effective and lowered emissions as you wish to do. I work as a nurse and since having my family I tend to now only use my car for work as we take advantage of our free classes locally and parks etc and lucky have a village I can meet other mums for coffee.”**

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## SPRING HOUSE CHILDRENS CENTRE

- 21 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community.
- There is concern that the alternative(s) highlighted in the consultation document are not easily accessible via public transport.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“To know where to go when there is an issue, to be able to use the local services/ businesses that feel safe is a godsend. The transport links and parking in the area makes it feel like a safe environment. Mental health after having a baby is such a challenge.”**

**“I visit this every week to see other adults and children, to talk to the receptionist and the staff. They are all amazing and it is so lovely to come to a safe inviting space. I moved to Sevenoaks in 2012 and as a single mother fleeing domestic violence. If the children enter wasn't there I would have been so lonely in this new area with no one to help me. It takes a village and spring house was my village.”**

**“I would be unable to access other children's centres meaning it would be impossible for me to get my baby weighed regularly and my children would miss out on accessing all the amazing classes and events that Spring House run.”**

**“If this will also be closed the nearest children centre to attend for me and my family will be Edenbridge, which would take about 50 minutes to 1 hour, which is simply ridiculous and not feasible with small children.”**

**“Northern Ward residents will be significantly affected by this as they will need to travel further and uphill to access its services. This would cause a disadvantage to those with less mobility - for instance parents, carers and disabled people.”**

**“Although Sevenoaks is considered an affluent area, there are significant pockets of deprivation with several vulnerable families - travelling to Swanley or Edenbridge is not an option for the majority of them. Public transport to Edenbridge is not feasible.”**

**“Spring House Children's Centre is already a co-partnership agency used community location. KCC use the site which is owned by Health Visiting. We share their space. It is well used in a location where it is convenient for the public to travel to. It is set-up for Special Needs and disability and liaison with other agencies is effective. The proposal to remove Spring House as a Children's Centre is counter productive, in a deprived with numerous vulnerable families that WILL NOT TRAVEL to a pop-up community hub or into Sevenoaks to the Library. Vulnerable families that struggle with engagement WILL NOT ENGAGE IN A SHARED SPACE . Keep this venue due to Public Need.”**

**“There is no easy public transport link between Sevenoaks and Edenbridge meaning that non-drivers, such as myself, or those who are not confident driving immediately with a young baby will be left struggling to access services.”**

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## SWANLEY CHILDRENS CENTRE

- 21 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community.
- There is some concern over the proposed re-location of the service provision and the suitability of co-locating services.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“Swanley Children’s Centre is a much loved centre locally and used for maternity services. This is a highly deprived area that requires a local service.”**

**“This would limit the groups I am able to take my twins to. Also this centre has always been busy when I have attended, which has been great to meet other local mums, whilst my babies are safe, happy, able to explore and engage with others.”**

**“My daughter is now aged 10. I was a new first time Mum at the age of 40 and the sure start centre was a massive part of my journey being successful. It is smaller, more intimate building with a personal touch that cannot be recreated in the Swanley link. I think had the service been in a more formal building I along with many other would not have attended. I was emotionally overwhelmed by having a little person to care for and they offered invaluable support. Allowed new parents to make friends with other new parent building a support network.”**

**“Swanley has significant areas of deprivation with several vulnerable families - mixing Youth and Children Centres services will create barriers for families as it will no longer be seen as a safe, dedicated unit.”**

**“I accept reluctantly, that due to the more versatile setting and provision at the Swanley Youth Hub in such close proximity; that it is unlikely that Swanley Children's Centre, in the same buildings' footprint as Children's Social Care at the Willows; will continue in its current setting and will move into the Youth Hub. I do not believe that there has been sufficient consultation with Midwifery and Health Visiting and the other agencies that use the Swanley Children's Centre, as it is currently already a jointly used community hub and with the currently proposals to close the Swanley Children's Centre and move into the Youth Hub; the currently best working practice of close working with Health and Midwifery will be lost unless they too are located in the Swanley Youth Hub. I believe that there also needs to be consideration of MORE Parking at Swanley Youth Hub due to more staff and public using the Hub. I also think families with young children will be reluctant and no longer travel the distance to the Swanley Youth Hub even though it is just a mile or so distance.”**

- 16 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community. Some commented that a reduction in staffing has contributed to a reduction in recent usage.
- There is concern that the alternative(s) highlighted in the consultation document are not easily accessible via public transport.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“West Kingsdown is the edge of our area and very far from any other children’s centres. This should be the reason it remains supported!”**

**“The local community will be severely affected.”**

**“If this will also be closed the nearest children centre to attend for me and my family will be Edenbridge, which would take about 50 minutes to 1 hour, which is simply ridiculous and not feasible with small children.”**

**“This is a classic case of 'chicken and egg' impacting upon service provision and service use. This was reduced to a part-time children's centre due to staffing, NOT lack of public engagement, lack of Staff. That led to a reduction in the provision of services, which led to a decline in use by the public. And so on. It is a well provided Children's Centre which again is already being used by other agencies, Midwifery and Health Visiting. This Children's Centre should be EXPANDED with guaranteed staff and provision for this remote community. It is wrong to remove this vital community hub that is located in a School premises.”**

**“We believe that the users of this provision will not access services in Edenbridge or Swanley due to distance required to travel.”**



## IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - SWALE

### CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Swale.

#### BEACHES CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 54 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 61% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 52% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 37% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).
- 22% express concerns that it is costly to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to access proposed alternative(s).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (54)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for families / children / babies	33	61%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	28	52%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	20	37%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	16	30%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	12	22%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	10	19%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere /insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	9	17%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	8	15%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	1	2%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	1	2%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“We visit these centres 2-3 times a week for various activities. For myself it allows bonding with my child and reassurance amongst other parents. For my partner it creates a social network where she feels she can talk about the struggles and joys or parenthood in a friendly understanding atmosphere.”**

**“It serves people who live in a remote community. The facilities are excellent. Which is the same for many of the children’s centres across Kent. The equipment is amazing and people never know when they are open. They don’t deliver enough of a service as they are often closed. Seashells is fully open and delivering a wide range of services but is not assessable for all as the buses on the island are limited.”**

**“This would have impacted me greatly, as I have stated I have autism, anxiety, and depression. These permanent centres make me feel safe unjudged, understood and listen too. It’s like a community of parents in the same boat, I took my now 9 year old daughter to these centres and me, my daughter other parents and their children are still friends. The fact that these centres are safe and permanent gives me great comfort for my baby boy and myself. The facilities are great for helping me with his skills to grow and help for myself. There is a safe outside area for children to play in with no danger. If these get moved to halls etc we will lose that and not feel our children are safe as the places could get vandalised and the children will miss out.”**

**“Public transport is not very good on the Isle of Sheppey. Mums are not going to get the children on a bus to travel all the way from Warden to Queensborough for a one hour group. Also not safe on a bus as no baby seats. Discriminating against people who do not drive. There will be an increase in mental health problems if you close these centres. Still very upset the centre in Minster was closed. Need the groups to be easily accessible for mums to pop in. Not have to travel an hour or so on a bus! If mums are not working children need to go to the groups to see other children-especially if they do not go to nursery. Bad idea shutting them.”**

**“The proposal to shut Beaches Children’s Centre would have a huge health impact on the children of the East of the Isle of Sheppey. The Isle of Sheppey already has some of the worst clinical outcomes across Kent and Medway. Closure of this centre will mean that families will be unable to access services if they live in this area. Though the nearest centre is 8/9 miles, public transport options are not frequent and/or reliable, and 48% of the residents of the island do not have access to a car. GP access on the island can also be problematic for residents, with a GP to patient ratio at 1:3,626 it cannot be expected that the GP will be able to pick up the support for all patients.**

**There have also been proposals for budget cuts for the voluntary and community sector in Swale, which will already have a huge impact of the health and wellbeing of residents of the Isle of Sheppey. For those living in Sheppey, the voluntary and community sector provides an invaluable contribution to their standard of living, including supporting people with housing, food parcels, and community activities, to name a few. Cuts to both the VCS and cutting the children's centre will have an additional impact and will result in a significant rise in behavioural problems, poor educational attainment and the risk of children partaking in risky behaviours such as smoking, drinking, illicit drug use and sexual activity. All of which will have an impact upon both the children themselves and the system as a whole. Access to services in the Isle of Sheppey is already sparse, and therefore removal of the Children's Centre will be highly detrimental to the population."**

**"Beaches Children's Centre is a purpose-built Children's Centre that was donated by George Wharton, this Centres opening hours has been reduced since Covid and is now open two days a week rather than five days a week. Already this is having an impact on the families within the areas for example not being able to access the foodbank, Groups reaching full capacity and having to turn residents away. Beaches Children's Centre reaches a range of targeted families and supports them within groups and through the sensory room. The sensory room supports children through stimulation of their senses this room is predominantly used by families with babies or with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Closing this Centre could have a negative impact on families that are vulnerable and struggling with mental health. Beaches Children's Centre is the only service that offers groups for children in the Warden/Leysdown area there are no other under 5's group within the area. Taking away this centre will continue to increase the isolation of families within the area and negatively impact the children on starting school being school ready."**

**"As you have stated within the consultation document, this children's centre is located in one of the areas of highest need within Swale. This area is second only to Sheerness as shown within your Needs Framework as being the highest levels of child poverty, high levels of obesity, older people in poverty and high levels of emergency hospital admissions. As well as the prominent levels of poverty, there are considerable educational needs and high numbers of preventable deaths. This data puts Beaches at the heart of a community that has considerable need, therefore we do not feel that it would be acceptable to close a facility that could be a lifeline or developmental support line for residents."**

**The location of the proposed Family Hub to replace Beaches is in Queenborough which is completely the opposite side of the Isle of Sheppey. This location is not easily accessible as it is connected mostly by miles of country lanes or roads that do not have safe public footpaths. Residents living in the location of Beaches that are vulnerable or living in poverty do not have access to a reliable public transport network to get them to Queenborough. The cost to families to get taxi's is unrealistic and the bus services are being reduced and cut which does not support a future plan for residents that they will be able to trust the bus services will still be available to use when the centre is closed."**

**Many residents that live in the location of Beaches, may live in caravans or belong to a transient population who may only engage with services by physically attending a centre as and when they need support. This can also cause data to be skewed of the area as data around these groups can be sketchy. The residents living in this location do not have a particularly reliable internet due to some very rural locations and there is a portion of this community who are digitally excluded. Some cannot read or write, therefore removing**

access to a 'front door' could be extremely detrimental to these residents, especially if they can't afford to travel to Queenborough or do not have the means to get there.

You have stated that outreach will be delivered as a response to removing Beaches, however we know little about what this will look like and feel that it is unacceptable to present outreach as your response when you cannot reassure us that these particularly vulnerable residents have a way of accessing services easily or without cost. If you should choose to go ahead with the closure to Beaches, it would make more sense to locate the Family Hub in Sheerness as this is the most centralised location on the Island and although not ideal, residents can travel to Sheerness by bus from Leysdown or Warden Bay."

"Children in Sheppey already suffer from lack of youth services like youth clubs. Children under 5 deserve the best support. Reg health visitors, midwife support, addiction support face to face in their area not an hour non-existent bus ride away. All households will be affected."

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Sheppey Gateway. 10 people attended. Additional engagement events also took place at Beaches Children's Centre in which 7 people attended.
- In these events, concerns were raised about potential closure of Beaches, availability of public transport to access alternatives, long journey times, whether outreach will be suitable given the venues available (e.g. village hall is fully booked for nursery), rural isolation and local pockets of deprivation.

## LADYBIRD CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 37 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 73% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 54% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 43% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).
- 19% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / whether services would be available elsewhere.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (37)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for families / children / babies	27	73%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	20	54%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	16	43%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	11	30%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere /insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	7	19%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	6	16%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	4	11%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	8%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	1	3%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“If this is closed then this is a massive mistake. Children and their families in this deprived area will suffer as this is vital to getting people together to socialise and child development. It would also mean a loss of jobs which is concerning in the current economic climate. Perhaps instead of closing it, promote these services and offer funding or charity support**

**for funds. I heavily relied on these services when I had my daughter and have wonderful memories. I will definitely be taking my 2nd child once she is born too and will be extremely upset if these services are removed! The island needs more things like this not less!”**

**“I will feel very isolated, I don’t like travelling off the island as I’m epileptic and I have a daughter at school so attending children’s centres on the island is my social network and I am able to watch my son play and interact with other children older and younger. Also been able to meet new mums who I can now call friends and on my days I have off of work my son and I got to these settings and we play and interact with others which is great.”**

**“Closing down centres impacts people who need to have services local to them, This may be due to them being unable to drive or public transport being unreliable. It is also important for parents and children to meet people at groups local to them. With just one centre left on the Isle of Sheppey surely this will mean some people will be unable to access services and put more pressure on the remaining centre to cater for everyone.”**

**“We visit these centres 2-3 times a week for various activities. For myself it allows bonding with my child and reassurance amongst other parents. For my partner it creates a social network where she feels she can talk about the struggles and joys of parenthood in a friendly understanding atmosphere.”**

**“Local easy to get to. I have 2 children, one nearly 3 and one nearly a year old. ladybirds has enabled me to have the confidence to get out with my 2 children. My eldest was a lockdown baby and was very shy and hadn't been many places until my 2nd was born. I was apprehensive about taking them both out but ladybirds enable me to get out of the house and socialise for myself as a stay at home mum but also as a safe space for my 2 children to go to.”**

**“This is a popular, well established and much needed facility attending to the needs of children, families and individuals living in the area of deprivation. If this centre closes, service users will suffer and their circumstances will deteriorate rapidly. The proposal to redirect service users to centres 3.3 miles away is unworkable.”**

**“Queenborough is noted as one of the other areas of deprivation located on the Isle of Sheppey, with most households being located around the area of Rushenden in Queenborough. Therefore, Ladybird’s is the closest most accessible centre for residents and currently provides services within walking distance to those who most need it. By removing access to this centre, residents would be expected to travel with the associated cost of travel and lack of reliable bus services this could impact on the existing work that is being done with families living in this location. We can see that you are suggesting a new Family Hub facility in Queenborough which would be accessible to residents in this location, however as it is currently this site does not provide appropriate facilities and without details of the proposed outreach services offer, we are concerned that there will be gaps in service provision. One of our suggestions, should the removal of this site go ahead, is to grow the availability of services available from Sheerness from either Seashells Children’s Centre or Sheppey Gateway. This would mean that there will be barriers through cost or availability of travel, but many residents travel to Sheerness regularly, where most shops, services and public transport all converge.”**

## ST MARY'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 81 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 57% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 49% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (52%).
- 27% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- 19% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / whether services would be available elsewhere.

### **Children's Centres and Youth Hubs**

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (81)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	46	57%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	42	52%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	40	49%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	29	36%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	22	27%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	17	21%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	15	19%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	9	11%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	7	9%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	6	7%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This is our local children’s Centre which my newborn attends. I am concerned the closure of this facility will make it harder for us to access care, support and classes for my newborn daughter.”**

**“I’m disgusted to hear about the potential closure. I’ve been visiting regularly since I fell pregnant with my first child. I’m now in the late stages of my second pregnancy and have been regularly visiting St Mary’s Children’s Centre. The next closest children’s centre to me is in Herne Bay and each and every time I’ve had to go there it’s been a total nightmare. Traffic is horrendous in Herne Bay and it disappoints me that a service I could access on my doorstep could be closed. I’d hate having to drive to Herne Bay with all the stress it causes me to get there. How is forcing someone to take longer journeys cutting emissions.”**

**“This is going to impact the Faversham community massively. St Mary’s is a community hub for the families who attend there. They start at the midwife’s and come back for health once baby has arrived and then attend the group. It would be such a shame to see St Mary’s go. Not only is it Central but it also has great parking making it stress free when arriving. Bysing Wood’s accessibility is not great. This can then make a simple trip to the children centre (which is meant to be fun and stress free) a really difficult time. There is no parking for families and is a far walk from where you do park. The school is not helpful in showing parents how to get into the centre and when health visitors were working from here their parents were also unable to find the building as it is very hidden.”**

**“St. Mary’s has been a hugely useful and supportive centre for us and I know is used by so many families in huge need of support. Closing it would be negligent.”**

**“Shutting St Mary’s will put more strain in Bysing wood. St Mary’s is more central, easier to find and is accessible by public transport. There are dedicated areas which are easy to set up for activities and there is a central place where people who are struggling can go for support. It is a good place to see midwives and health visitors and there is always somebody there to support you.”**

**“This is the local hub for the ME138 area, it houses health visitor appointments and midwifery appointments along with free crucial baby groups for local parents and babies. I think, given the fact that Faversham has greatly increased in population it would be very detrimental to take this away. People already struggle to access services without removing the faculties for it.”**

**“This will affect future cohorts of mums and babies, my community, my children's school years. I do not want to live with the fallout of a community plagued by post-natal depression, mums and babies who have nowhere to go and socialise and play. This will impact on kids’ development, behaviour issues down the line and cost the council much much more in EHC plans, SaLT and behaviour interventions. Accessible services that are close and convenient for mums and babies are paramount to tackling social issues. It takes a village to raise a child and mums and babies should not be pushed into their homes and forced to parent without any peer support which is what will happen if St Mary’s closes. Services need to be close and convenient; access is so important for mums. It is not fair to close down public spaces for mums and babies to gather and be in.”**



**“Faversham's population is increasing at an alarming rate with all the new housing estates. It does not make sense that the town will only have one centre to cater for all. People who are unable to drive and live on the other side of town will be unable to access the services.”**

**“I currently use the St Mary's Children's centre several times a week with my baby son. If this was to close it would be a blow to my whole family. As it's the only area accessible to me by foot/public transport I will be unable to access any services. I feel I represent a key vulnerable demographics that will be disproportionately affected by the proposed changes. I have had many benefits from attending classes at St Mary's and am extremely concerned about the impact closing these centres will have on maternal mental health and child development. I am also concerned by the statement on the previous page that closing sites will reduce carbon emissions without any rationale provided to substantiate that claim- this is clearly a cost cutting exercise. I will be raising this issue with my MP and escalating further.”**

**“Parents are unclear about this consultation. Having spoken with a young father about the proposed closure of St Mary's Children's Centre he stated that no it was not closing as it stated in the literature that they were going to 'leave' it. The English used in the consultation document is unclear. Why not state that it is the intention of Kent County Council to close the centre so that it is clear to parents and there is no ambiguity. There is a real lack of understanding from those who drafted the consultation documents. The language used is confusing to at least some parents.”**

**“The stripping away of the community's assets and perhaps most especially its provision for children, is of concern to everyone in the community...or should be. Does the council not agree? Having spoken to some parents who use the children's centre at St Mary's recently I was intrigued to be told that there was going to be similar children's provision at Faversham library. Having studied the document I see this is not the case. Is it possible that parents have been misinformed or have misunderstood as some of the 'hubs' do seem to include such provision whereas it seems that the provision at Faversham library is only to be extended to include adults with learning difficulties? Have confusing messages been shared? If so this needs to be clarified in some way speedily.”**

**“This Children's Centre is located in an area of high density population, showing that there is a high need for access to multiple services. It is concerning that the locations of the nearest accessible centres are considerably further away, as Murston and Milton are located in the Sittingbourne area and this is shown as over 7miles from the ward. We can see that you have suggested Bysingwood Children's Centre as the closest alternative offer, however with a more densely populated area, the concern is that residents will struggle to access services. Bysingwood is a very small centre and so we have great concerns on how the centre will cope with the possible levels of access required if used as an alternative site. Again, this leads us to concerns about the levels of outreach support that will be put in place to replace this particular centre as Abbey Ward is flagged as somewhere that needs outreach provision and how easy will it be for residents to access a 'safe front door'.**

## Health Visiting Service

- 52 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 54% of those making a comment express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (42%).
- 33% noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- 23% express concerns that services would suffer if moved elsewhere / whether services would be available elsewhere.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (52)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	28	54%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	22	42%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	17	33%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	17	33%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	12	23%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	8	15%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	6	12%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	6	12%
Population increase / new homes will need these facilities / demand will increase	3	6%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	2	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This is the ONLY centre for the Faversham community that provides health care for young families with contact with midwives and health visitors. As a mother of two under 3, trying to get access to this kind of care is extremely challenging when I have to go beyond my community. To limit this service would be to endanger a generation of children and mothers.”**

**“Accessing the health visitors at St Mary’s is essential, they have been extremely helpful with myself and my son. There service is stretched and it can be very hard to get contact with the health visitors but having the clinics available at the centre is great.”**

**“People cannot afford public transport to other places; other centres are not close to public transport in other towns. More people will contact doctors instead of contacting their health visitor. Less people will go see their health visitor if the appointment isn’t in town. It isn’t practical to leave a whole town without a set place for appointments.”**

**“Mothers with young babies would have to travel further to access the health visiting service. There is a very effective health visiting service currently available for young families at St Mary’s children centre. Many parents have expressed support for this to continue.”**

**“Longer wait times to see the Health Visitor, detrimental to child health and parental mental health. If all services re located elsewhere will be more people trying to access the same place or location resulting in longer wait times, increased stress and poorer family outcomes.”**

**“Our closest children’s centre is St Mary’s and we walk to our appointments and St Mary’s closing would cause us problems as we don’t drive.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, engagement events took place at St Marys Children Centre. At least 11 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about Bysing Wood being proposed as an alternative as it is hard to find and doesn’t have the facilities to have multiple services in at the same time due to space constraints. The parking is considered less safe there as the school does not permit children’s centre users to use the car park.

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## GROVE PARK CHILDRENS CENTRE

- 21 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community and people's mental health.
- A couple commented on reductions in use due to the pandemic and this could affect consultation contribution.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“It’s a shame for this to be closing, it is near people that can’t travel further, it’s also nice for us to travel to a different venue and meet different people.”**

**“As a family during the cost of living crisis we are unable to afford to take our 2 young children to soft plays. It helps maintain mental health by taking our children to these centres so they can socialise, play and not miss out.”**

**“This will mean less vulnerable families has access to toys, peer interaction and information.”**

**“Closing down centres impacts people who need to have services local to them, This may be due to them being unable to drive or public transport being unreliable. It is also important for parents and children to meet people at groups local to them.”**

**“This Children’s Centre is located within reasonable distance of other suitable access points; however we are concerned as in other centres about the levels of services that can be offered from the nearest location which is Wood Grove. This site is already delivering a number of services, and we understand that they are very efficient in this, however by closing Grove Park will the numbers be unmanageable to allow access. Our continued concerns are echoed here with regards to the levels of outreach that will be put in place around the area to ensure that Wood Grove and Milton Court do not end up being over-burdened with numbers trying to access services.”**

**“This building has hardly been used since the pandemic. I fail to see how it can be considered in this proposal as its services have not reopened and we are not able access the resources there.”**

## NEW HOUSE YOUTH & SPORTS CENTRE

- 25 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 76% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for young people in the area and is/was used frequently / seen as a lifeline to 64%.
- Users comment on undertaking sporting activities at the centre and whether this will be available elsewhere (36%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (25)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for young people	19	76%
Used frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	16	64%
Undertake sporting activities / will these be available elsewhere	9	36%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	7	28%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	5	20%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	4	16%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	16%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This was a thriving youth hub and centre for fitness classes, basketball etc but it didn’t ever reopen after the pandemic. It’s a building that although large and I am sure needs renovating offered something different. If you are looking at multi centres and co locating do leisure centres come into that too? When we are looking at ways of keeping our young people active and promoting health this would be a really good, sensible option. I do also believe libraries can offer more with quiet "areas" rather than the whole area to allow for more groups of all ages and activities.”**

**“The new house youth and sports centre is a prominent part of the community. Its where disadvantaged children can go and gain advice. As someone that lives in the area of New House youth and sports centre, I fear that young people will not have that outlet and possibly turn to crime. Taking away the youth centres will not help the community or budget because where you're cutting the building cost, the police will have to pick up the**

slack. I am an adult that grew up in the sure start era and I am grateful to sure start every day because as a child they realised I had speech problems and if this was not recognised by the people at SureStart it would have delayed my academic achievements. By not having youth centres, children that have been delayed by the pandemic will be further delayed in academics because childcare is so expensive meaning that the first interaction with skilled adults won't be till the age of four potentially. As a person that is going into the education sector, I beg you please give children the foundations they need to go to school and progress.”

“Young people have limited services in Swale and this building serviced a large population of the young people. Young people have no access to free sport activity locally so this will be a massive loss for the residents of Swale.”

“Young people have been badly affected by the Pandemic and need support during a period in their lives when there are significant challenges. This service is long established and does what it says on the tin. It provides young people with a safe place to integrate and build skills. Young people will not take kindly to being uprooted and redirected to a children's centre in Milton Court and the idea of expecting them to travel between 5.2 and 8.8 miles to the other alternatives is impossible. The proposal is quite simply unworkable and it will lead to a deterioration in young people's mental health and social circumstances. It will also lead to disturbances including anti-social behaviour in the community due to young people not being able to access positive activities.”

“This building has been unused for quite a while now but this is a shame as I think lots of services could be brought to that building instead of reallocating away. It has a car park, wheelchair accessibility, rooms for social communities and activities, offices, etc.”

“As there are no KCC centres on the Isle of Sheppey and New House is being proposed to close where will my relations be able to access services for young people with additional needs to the same standard and where would they be able to engage in sports activities in a sports hall for free? The current Youth Zone is no bigger than a room at New House and has a ball court that has no permanent lighting and can only be used in 'fair' weather. The staff at New House were trained and professional, this cannot be said for all projects that run clubs for young people.”

“We are aware that the site closed due to the pandemic and has never fully reopened to pre-covid functionality. This has impacted youth services and young people who previously had a safe space to access, as well as being able to access a number of activities and services all from the same facility, this is no longer possible. We are aware that the youth teams work hard to try and accommodate activities in other locations, such as sports halls and school facilities, but this service is very inconsistent and not reliable. Also, by utilising various other facilities, there is no consistency which means that young people have to be aware of where things are taking place each week, and this is causing a barrier as previously they could just turn up and take part in any of the activities taking place in the one location. Issues such as size of alternative venue are impacting on service levels, meaning that some alternative venues cannot accommodate groups in the size they were able to accommodate previously and therefore resulting in some young people not being able to access the activity.

There have been several antisocial behaviour hotspots in Sittingbourne Town Centre since the closure of the site and it is hard for the youth teams as they have nowhere to refer the

**young people to as a consistent ‘front door’, this is especially difficult in the winter when it is cold and dark. A number of locations have been trialled, but these are either deemed inaccessible by young people or are a way out of the town centre footprint. This was not previously considered an issue when New House was operational. Without a central hub for youth services, it has become a very disjointed service that does not provide consistency for our young people, and we are concerned that these issues will continue to increase without the consistency of a main centre.”**

- Separate conversations took place with some of the young people aged 13-15 who currently attend the centre. It is unknown how many young people gave feedback on the consultation in this way.
- Some concerns were raised about losing the space and facilities available at New House in comparison to the proposed alternative.

# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS - THANET

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Thanet.

### CALLIS GRANGE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

#### **Children's Centre**

- 43 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 57% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 24% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).
- 16% express concerns it would be difficult to travel elsewhere / there is insufficient public transport to travel to proposed alternative(s).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (43)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	26	60%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	24	56%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	13	30%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	7	16%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	6	14%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	9%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	3	7%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	7%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	2	5%



Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“It's the only children centre in Broadstairs. Removing this will deprive children and their families of development and support. Travelling from Broadstairs to Margate or Ramsgate as proposed is expensive and unaffordable.”**

**“There is a much lower than average car-ownership in this part of Broadstairs and we have lost bus services making it more difficult to reach other centres. Add in the cost of travelling that will impact on families on low incomes. There has been a massive reduction in what has been offered at the centre over the last few years so it has become a shell of what it was 10 years ago. Families in this part of Thanet need access to support, advice and facilities close at hand.”**

**“This area has a significant population of less fortunate residents, financially, educationally and with poor housing. These families need a place local to them for support, help and being part of a community.”**

**“These buildings were a lifeline for me when my children were babies/toddlers. Closing them could increase mothers' risk of postpartum mental health issues and feelings of isolation and listlessness.”**

**“Parents like me will have to pay for transport or for other children's groups to avoid isolation. The suggestion that reducing carbon emissions is a key priority does not take into account the emissions created by families having to travel to reach centres. Our bus services are atrocious and have room for 1 infant per bus. You're expecting families to own and afford to run a car - thus contributing to greater carbon emissions, and higher costs for families at a time when money is tight.”**

**“Due to Callis Grange being a part time Children's Centre I can understand the rationale for suggesting leaving the building but recognise this will impact the local community.”**

## Health Visiting Service

- 28 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 57% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 46% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (46%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (28)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	16	57%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	13	46%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	12	43%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	11	39%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	3	11%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	3	11%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	2	7%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The impact will affect many families who live close enough to use the service. Midwives and health visitor teams work out of these making sure most appointments are local families to support if they do not drive. Many families would not attend groups or appointments further away due to travel costs for them.”**

**“The closure of the centre will mean there will no longer be an accessible local health visiting team in our ward. This will have a negative impact on the children and families in my community. Parents will be less inclined to visit a health visitor if it means travelling 2 miles to access the service. This means parents will not receive essential advice about their child's health and dietary needs. The incidence of child health issues, such as obesity will increase and this will have negative consequences in our community, with increased strain on our health services.”**

**“How can disabled people travel all the way over to Margate when doing health visitor checks. 1 in 4 has mental health issues how will these people access services. They won't, children will suffer!”**

**“The health visitor is a hugely important person in the life of new parents and young children. To move any of these will cause undue anxiety and opportunities to intervene in abuse, welfare or social problems will be missed. Unacceptable.”**

**“Callis Grange Childrens' centre is located strategically within a deprived area & therefore I strongly support that this facility must remain. It is well served by a local bus service and is located within school grounds. Therefore this centre is convenient for parents with children who need its services. Also apart from health visiting services; this centre given its location & access has the potential to be used as a delivery hub for many other useful community services.”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Margate Library. 5 people attended.
- Concerns were raised about the data used for Callis Grange decisions and it being in an area of high need/isolated area and neighbouring school would see an impact on child development.

**Children's Centre**

- 64 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 75% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 69% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (39%).
- 30% comment on using the nursery and that it is needed.
- 25% praise the facilities at the building and are concerned whether these will feature at proposed alternative(s).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (64)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	48	75%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	44	69%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	25	39%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	19	30%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	16	25%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	14	22%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	13	20%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	13	20%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	8	13%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	7	11%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“I have used the service for midwife appointments, breastfeeding clinic and for baby play sessions. It would impact us greatly is Priory were to close. I also worry about future pregnancies and having to travel further afield for vital support.”**

**“I use Priory for my daughter and have done since I was 4 months pregnant. She is now almost 2 years old. The staff are lovely, the atmosphere is welcoming, the access is fantastic. They take care of you and speak to you in terms you can understand. Losing Priory would be devastating. I take my daughter there once a week for play group. I don't drive and losing that socialisation opportunity for her would be heartbreaking. The other children's centres are all too far away I can't afford the travel and it's hard to arrange the travel.”**

**“My children love the play group they go to every week, it's local to us and us being in a flat with two children under 5 it helps it being local as we don't need to rush as much and the kids have enough time to wake up and have breakfast and get ready for the group, for example my daughter ages 2 has gained a lot of confidence, social skills with other children is learning to share with other children that isn't just her baby brother and is getting her to want to go to school to, she loves the group so much. If this group was to shut we wouldn't be able to go to another centre as I wouldn't have the money every week to get travel as we don't drive so it's not easy for us to get around.”**

**“This place has been a lifeline to me and friends with children and i would be utterly heartbroken for future mothers or fathers if they don't get the chance to have access to this amazing place. Especially those who have no outdoor space at home, when the centre provides this for them with an array of outdoor equipment/activities, so vital to young children and their physical development.”**

**“This centre is constantly busy during groups. The groups are well run with lots of equipment to help development. The staff are extremely supportive, and as a new mum, they were my lifeline that I would have struggled without! Removing this centre also loses the safe outdoor space that children need, especially those without gardens. It's a disgusting proposal in an already deprived area.”**

**“It would be such a loss to lose priory. It is well attended for both breastfeeding support and weigh in clinics. There is a real community feel that local parents all come together in this space and I think it would be detrimental to many parents' health and well-being. The developmental reviews are run out of priory and as it is so close to town the DNA rate is lower, saving the NHS money.”**

**“The loss of this building is a disgrace, leaving many families without a hub, a place of support, a refuge, a nursery. A place to ask for help and support, a regular building with different services within, in one place. Families who have individual needs, domestic violence, SEN, lack of food, need referrals to Early Help, groups, courses, all needing support. If it closes, these families will have nowhere to go, no stable place to visit especially if services keep changing where they are based all the time. Not all people want to use online services. It will also impact on working families, no childcare, they will lose their jobs.”**

**“Specialised resources will be lost, e.g.: specialised toys and equipment for children with special educational needs. The most vulnerable people in the community do not want to /**

are not able to mix with the people who do not understand their needs and will not want to be accessing services from the mainstream places like libraries.”

### Health Visiting Service

- 50 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 46% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 44% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (36%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (50)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	23	46%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	22	44%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	22	44%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	18	36%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	4	8%
Use nursery / nursery is needed	3	6%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	6%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	3	6%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	2	4%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	1	2%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The Health Visitor health clinic and breastfeeding clinic are useful to have close by and run weekly. These are always very busy and help support families. They have 2x weekly development checks and these are ensured to be the closest to the families’ postcodes as are aware of travel and cost of living many families can't afford to travel further. Families**

**are more likely to attend local centres than travel with young children as they can find this difficult.”**

**“My daughter uses the midwife’s service in this building, she is registered disabled, does not drive and part of her condition means she does not use public transport or taxi’s she would therefore not be able to access the service she needs.”**

**“I use the Health Visitors drop in to have my children weighed, I visit the feeding team and attend the Breastfeeding support group weekly. I used the centre for my midwife appointments while pregnant. I live in walking distance from Priory Children’s Centre and if the weather is bad there is ample parking. If I am redirected to Newlands or Ramsgate Library it would be too far to walk with 2 small children and there is not decent/safe parking at either of their sites. I do not feel the Health Visiting Service would be as supportive if offered online, nor is it efficient for them to increase home visits.”**

**“Health visiting service should remain in purpose built environments to best serve children and families’ needs, they should also remain within walking distance to families as the most vulnerable families will not travel. Health visiting services should remain within children's centres to allow for collaborative working between services and signposting to groups and services within the centre. This should not be about buildings but the people the services support. There are plenty of KCC office buildings that are wasting our money by sitting half empty while staff work from home that should be reviewed before front line services are impacted upon.”**

# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS – TONBRIDGE & MALLING

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS AND HEALTH VISITING

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Tonbridge & Malling.

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### BURHAM CHILDRENS CENTRE

- 18 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Those commenting noted the value of the services provided and their contribution to the local community.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s).

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“We would not be able to access the service It's a community and support for new parents. Why are you proposing this?”**

**“We would be very upset to lose Burham Childrens Centre. It is our closest children's centre to where we live. My three year old son and I love attending the Monday morning preschool group for social interaction and play.”**

**“Burham provides local stay and play and baby time sessions to the local area. Both of which I have and do attend with my little boy. These in person classes so close to the local community helped me and my little boy.”**

**“This centre is a crutch and lifesaver to so many families to meet other parents whilst your children are learning and socialising it is a place for families to make friends and speak to people in the same situations with the same struggles!”**

**“Burham always has high numbers within these groups and often is filled up. With it closing it makes the families in this area very restricted on where they are able to get to. There is not much within walking distance and the nearest centre is over an hour away.”**

**“This is local to my daughter and in area of extensive development. People from Wouldham, Burham and Eccles will have to go over To Snodland making provision inaccessible if have to use public transport with young children A viable alternative is required”.**



# IMPACT OF PART A 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS– TUNBRIDGE WELLS

## CHILDREN'S CENTRES, YOUTH HUBS, HEALTH VISITING AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNSELLING SERVICE

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation in Tunbridge Wells.

### HARMONY CHILDREN'S CENTRE

#### Children's Centre

- 49 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 69% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 65% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 37% of those making a comment express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (27%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (49)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	34	69%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	32	65%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	18	37%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	13	27%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	10	20%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	9	18%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	6	12%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	6	12%

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Activities should be free / cannot afford to pay for activities	5	10%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	4	8%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“This was my local place where I met with my midwife, where my daughter had her checks and we have visited the play groups. It would be an incredible loss to the community to not have this service any longer. It’s a busy children’s centre and a great way of meeting other mums.”**

**“It would be devastating to lose the centre. I have used them for the last 3 years, and their help, support and socialising for myself and kids has been a life saver. If it closes, it will take away a great social outreach for us.”**

**“This centre is so important for mums in Rusthall. I used it weekly when I had two children under two and it was a lifeline for me when I was lonely and suffering with anxiety. It is essential places like this stay open for mums in the community who sometimes don’t know anyone to come together in a safe and friendly environment.”**

**“We cannot afford nursery for our youngest child due to recent circumstances. Stay and play etc is a great way for her to interact with other children her age. We do not have a car available during the day and it would make it much harder having to travel to a "hub". The chance of meeting local mums greatly reduces.”**

**“My daughter at the moment goes to the children's centres 3 times a week, it's built her confidence so much and her interaction with other children's and adults develops each week. Not to mention all the other skills she gains from learning, singing and playing. She would miss it so much; I would only be able to go once a week instead of 3 times if the other centres close.”**

**“Closing this building takes away a sage space and a community for many parents. Public transport is terrible in Tunbridge wells and can take a long time and various changes (which are very expensive) on buses to get to other centres. This may result in affecting children’s development as well as parents’ mental health if they are unable to easily get to a centre.”**

**“I personally will be very impacted on this. I live up the road and can't afford to take my baby to paid groups. I have an autistic son and so the limited time he is at preschool, there are not many places I can take my baby in that time, especially for free. The Harmony Children's centre is an amazing place, full of friendly people who care. I love going here and as a new person who has just moved to Rusthall, I feel really upset that this could be taken away from myself and all the parents who use and rely on this service. It's teaching children how to socialise from a young age and it's essential for us to get out and mix with others from the community. It will really be missed if taken away and will be a huge loss to the village.”**

“Rusthall is located approximately two miles west of the Main Urban Area of Royal Tunbridge Wells and is a separate village settlement with its own independent services. We are very concerned that should the existing children’s centre close then alternative service provision would be a significant distance away- Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub being 2.2 miles away and Little Forest Children’s Centre being 3.6 miles away (with respective walking distances of 40 minutes and 1 hour 7 minutes). Again, this raises the issues in relation to increased distance and travel times and reliance on public transport, as well as additional topographical issues if walking or cycling between Rusthall and Tunbridge Wells. This would have the likely consequence of less visits and use of the service, resulting in detrimental impacts on child development and the health and well-being of other users, which is of serious concern to us. The consultation document indicates that outreach services could possibly be provided at Rusthall Library as an alternative. However, this is yet to be decided and the level of service provision is currently unknown. It is also questionable whether a library building would be suitable for some services as some children’s/youth activities could be too noisy, and there could be cost implications for KCC in adapting the space/library building to be used.”

### Health Visiting Service

- 31 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 35% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won’t be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (26%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (31)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	11	35%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	11	35%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	11	35%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	8	26%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	13%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“My concern is for the parents who are struggling, but who do not have their own transport to go further afield. It can be difficult enough to just leave the house with a baby, let alone have to go to a place of support and comfort via different modes of public transport. Additionally, how will closing local centres reduce your carbon footprint, when most people will have to drive/go by public transport to a non-local centre? Harmony has been a lifeline for me, I'm beyond disgusted at the planned closure.”**

**“We live in Rusthall and the Children’s Centre has always been a god send, we can walk to it so no need to get kids in the car or on a bus. We’ve used it for midwife appointments, weigh clinics, HV checks, baby groups. Such a vital service for the village. We have some very disadvantaged families in Rusthall who would really truly miss the Children’s Centre”.**

**“Difficulty in reaching the vulnerable population in this deprived area. Will have impact on public health and safeguarding.”**

**“This is the only accessible venue for us and if it closes we will not be able to see a HV. The alternatives are not easily accessible by public transport from the villages.”**

### **Children and Young People’s Counselling Service**

- 31 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 40% of those providing a comment noted the service is essential / seen as a lifeline and 28% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal? Base: all answering (31)**

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seen as essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	10	40%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	7	28%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	4	16%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	4	16%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	16%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	1	4%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“An additional burden on parents of low income in accessing service. Reduction in bus services already impacting access. Lack of local knowledge and awareness of need. Reduction of service as a sneaky step towards eventual further reduction or closure.”**

**“It is very reassuring and comforting having this service so close, will be a huge shame to relocate this vital service.”**

**“With youth mental health problems on the rise, the need for counselling services is at an all-time high.”**

**“This is a popular, well established and much needed facility attending to the mental health needs of children, and young people during what is regarded as a Mental Health Pandemic following Covid. If this centre closes, the mental health of service users will suffer. It would be beneficial to point out here that counselling alleviates symptoms of personal distress and suffering, enhances wellbeing and capabilities, increases personal resilience, improves the quality of relationships between people, and facilitates sense of self that is meaning to those involved within their personal and cultural context. therefore the loss of such a service would be disastrous. Services like these need to be increased not reduced.”**

**“We are very concerned that alternative service provision would be a significant distance away- Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub being 2.2 miles away and Little Forest Children’s Centre being 3.6 miles away (with respective walking distances of 40 minutes and 1 hour 7 minutes). This raises the issues and concerns in relation to access, public transport and topography and the detrimental impact this may have on health and well-being of the young service users affected. We therefore request that KCC reconsiders the option of closing this facility and keeps it open. As mentioned above, the consultation document indicates that outreach services could possibly be provided at Rusthall Library as an alternative. However, this is yet to be decided and the level of service provision is currently unknown. Again, it is also questionable whether a library building would be suitable for this service as it may not provide enough private rooms/space for counselling services, and there could be cost implications for KCC in adapting the space/library building to be used.”**

## SOUTHBOROUGH / HIGH BROOMS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 40 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 58% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 33% of those making a comment express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (40)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	23	58%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	23	58%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	13	33%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	12	30%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	8	20%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	3	8%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	3	8%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	8%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	5%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“The children’s centres are a lifeline for a lot of people. Being able to drop in and see a health visitor was invaluable to me when I had my first baby. I have also used the stay and play and baby times which has been wonderful to walk to. Closing local children’s centres would take away part of the community and mean people can’t access these free services. Mum and baby groups are often expensive and in a cost of living crisis, the children’s centres become more valuable.”**

**“We go to the stay and play at the Southborough children's centre every week. My 1 year old loves it and it is hugely important to myself and her as a free space to meet with other mums and babies and find out important information. I do not have access to a car in the week so this is the only children's centre we can attend. Losing this resource will be devastating to many Southborough families.”**

**“Losing Southborough Children's Centre will have a massive impact on the local community. This is a very deprived area with families who are unable to travel to other venues either because of finance or poor mental health. I will also point out that families who are willing to travel, will drive, which increases emissions in the environment unnecessarily when they would happily walk to the local centre.”**

**“My daughter has SEN and we regularly attend the SEN play session on a Wednesday. If the centre closes and this session is moved to Cranbrook we will not be able to attend.”**

**“Closing this building takes away a safe space and a community for many parents. Public transport is terrible in Tunbridge wells and can take a long time and various changes (which are very expensive) on buses to get to other centres. This may result in affecting children’s development as well as parents’ mental health if they are unable to easily get to a centre.”**

**“We used this centre less but there are always activities and we are familiar with the area and parking, meaning we attend easily and frequently. I strongly believe that if you close these centres you’ll have more demand for mental health service from mothers on maternity leave who have felt isolated. People will feel isolated- especially first time mums.”**

**“Please let the school use the Southborough Community Centre. We have had a huge upsurge of families and pupils needing mental health support and for children who are struggling developmentally and still needing a pre early years’ experience or alternative provision in order to learn. As the SENCo we see an opportunities to be able to support some children with high needs SEN by having the additional facilities. Thus backing the LA’s plan to have children leave mainstream school for special schools.”**

**“Alternative service provision would be a significant distance away at Little Forest Children’s Centre which is shown to be 2.2 miles away (with an expected walking distance of 41 minutes). Again, this raises the same issues and concerns mentioned above in relation to access, public transport (although it is shown that 100% of households in this ward/area would be able to make a journey by public transport within 30 minutes it is not known how easy this would be or whether it is a direct route), topography, child development and health and well-being.”**

**Children's Centre**

- 33 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 69% of those providing a comment noted the centre is used frequently / seen as a lifeline and 45% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.
- 30% of those making a comment express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (24%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (33)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	17	52%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	15	45%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	10	30%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	8	24%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	6	18%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	4	12%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	4	12%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	6%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“We personally would be impacted as we frequently use the facilities at the Ark. It is a safe haven, a happy place, in quite a vulnerable part of town, and not personally, but to take away this hub could leave some women in a very fragile position.”**

**“We use this children’s centre regularly as it is in the same site as my children’s school. We have meeting here with Early Help, Together with Parents and other agencies as required to help my children with their additional needs. It is also used during school holidays for activities to help keep the children entertained at a low cost. This particular children’s**



centre already serves a large community of underprivileged families. My children will not only struggle accessing services in new environment, but changing location will cause time constraints in relation to the distance from their school, meetings will be more difficult to arrange.”

“The Ark Centre is the only place I have been able to get to see a Health Visitor for my son. I have been going every month. I don't drive and cannot afford a bus or taxi (I also have two under two and find it extremely stressful). I also go there for the Play Group on Mondays; this has helped my mental health massively. When my heating stopped working, the staff welcomed me in. They have been a huge support to me. I have completed an adult education course and I'm currently doing another. It has helped me get back into work. Closing The Ark Childrens Centre will impact my mental health and impact me financially.”

“Accessing Sherwood from Showfields/Ramslye by bus with small children in tow presents a barrier. People are going to be seriously disadvantaged. Services need to be accessible otherwise they may as well not exist. This proposed change is not in the interests of Showfields/Ramslye residents, who currently have an accessible service.”

“Alternative service provision would be located a significant distance away- with Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub shown to be 1.2 miles away and Little Forest Children's Centre 2.9 miles away (with respective walking distances of 25 minutes and 58 minutes). Although it is indicated that 100% of households in this ward/area would be able to make a journey by public transport within 30 minutes, it is not known how easy this would be or whether it is a direct route (i.e. no changes or transfers are needed). There could also be additional topographical issues if walking or cycling. This means that service users with no access to a private motor vehicle may visit less frequently. We therefore has concerns that this could have an impact on child development in the early years and/or health and wellbeing related issues for parents/carers and other users. The consultation document indicates that outreach services could possibly be provided at Showfields Library as an alternative. However, this is yet to be decided and the level of service provision is currently unknown. It is also questionable whether a library building would be suitable for some services as some children's/youth activities could be too noisy, and there could be cost implications for KCC in adapting the space/library building to be used.”

## **Children and Young People’s Counselling Service**

- 20 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 55% of those providing a comment noted the centre is seen as essential / as a lifeline and 30% comment it provides much needed support / services for local families in the area.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (20)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Seen as essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	11	55%
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	6	30%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	6	30%
Costly to travel elsewhere / insufficient public transport / increase carbon emissions	2	10%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	2	10%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	1	5%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	1	5%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“My son has counselling at the Ark. he is a nervous child but has settled into sessions and is familiar with the building. Closing and changing location might have a detrimental effect to his mental health as he will have to get used to another location.”**

**“Again, a familiar space for my extremely anxious child where she feels safe and comfortable and is on the same grounds as her school. Moving away from this is going to make things very difficult for us both and is likely to set her back.”**

**“Children of deprived households will suffer.”**

**“It’s an appalling decision & short sighted to close these services.”**

**“We have concerns that alternative service provision for this service would be a significant distance away- Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub is shown to be 1.2 miles away and Little Forest Children’s Centre 2.9 miles away (with respective walking distances of 25 minutes and 58 minutes). Users of this service are stated to be 0-19 years of age and will therefore be more reliant on getting a lift from an adult or using public transport. Although it is indicated that**

**100% of households in this ward/area would be able to make a journey by public transport within 30 minutes, it is not known how easy this would be or whether it is a direct route (i.e. no changes or transfers are needed). There could also be topographical issues if walking or cycling This means that service users with no access to a private motor vehicle may visit less frequently. We have concerns that this could have an impact on health and wellbeing and anxiety related issues. As mentioned above, the consultation document indicates that outreach services could possibly be provided at Showfields Library as an alternative. However, this is yet to be decided and the level of service provision is currently unknown. It is also questionable whether a library building would be suitable as it may not provide enough private rooms/space for counselling services, and there could be cost implications for KCC in adapting the space/library building to be used.”**

## CRANBROOK CHILDREN'S CENTRE

- 27 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 78% of those providing a comment noted the centre provides much needed support / services for local families in the area and 59% comment it is used frequently / seen as a lifeline.
- 37% of those making a comment express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.
- Users value the centre as being walking distance and they won't be able to access the proposed alternative(s) (30%).

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (27)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Currently provides much needed support / services for local families / children / babies	21	78%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	16	59%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	10	37%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk / access alternatives	8	30%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	5	19%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	5	19%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere / insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	4	15%
Health visitors / midwifery / maternity services offered currently / difficult to access elsewhere	2	7%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**"If this centre closes my son & I would be devastated. We love attending the weekly stay & play group. My son has learnt so many skills from this group & it's the highlight of his week. Many of us have arranged nursery around this group so we can still attend. The staff are all amazing; they are supportive & knowledgeable. This centre is a lifeline for so many parents. We need this centre."**

**"Every week we attend the stay and play session and the baby and you session. I'm a mum who struggles with their mental health and have to get out the house every day, otherwise I find it extremely hard. I've been taking my daughter since she was 3 months old and she is now 18 months old. Being able to access this services and take her regularly has had a**

massive impact on her development and social skills. It has also helped me massively with my mental health and being able to take to Nicola, who runs the groups. Closing this children's centre will have a massive negative impact on not only my mental health but my daughter's development and social skills as I can't access any other buildings in Tunbridge Wells."

"Anyone living rurally relying on public transport are isolated already, getting to Cranbrook is not necessarily easy but much more accessible than Little Forest. The preschool in Cranbrook primary school is due to close in July, families will rely more on children centre services to support their children's development."

"Closing this building takes away a safe space and a community for many parents. Public transport is terrible in Tunbridge wells and can take a long time and various changes (which are very expensive) on buses to get to other centres. This may result in affecting children's development as well as parents' mental health if they are unable to easily get to a centre."

"Cranbrook Children's Centre has been a social lifeline for families like mine. By moving it to the library we risk ruining two important facilities and ending up with a 'worst of both worlds' situation. Here are some of the key issues to consider: - Cranbrook Children's Centre has an outdoor play area but the library has no suitable outdoor space. - Library users want peace and quiet but making noise is part of children's play. How can you achieve this in a shared building? - There is only one set of toilets in the building, which could be a safeguarding issue if adult library users need to enter the children's play space to use the facilities. - Some children's centre sessions involve the provision of snacks. Does the library have the facility to continue this? - Messy play is an important part of the children's centre sessions. Will this still be feasible/allowed to continue when the space needs to be turned around quickly for other outreach activities? - If the library is going to be used for multiple KCC services in a community hub, where will the toys be stored?"

Cranbrook cannot be 'swept' into plans for Tunbridge Wells; we are a small community and must be considered on our own terms. Consolidating multiple Tunbridge Wells centres will have a limited impact on local users. Closing our only children's centre and creating a shared hub will have a drastic impact on the quality and accessibility of services to our community. We do not have the breadth of free and paid-for activities that are available in larger towns. The variety and availability of children's centre services have already been cut back in Cranbrook: we no longer have a breastfeeding clinic and the number of play sessions have been reduced. Please do not dilute this further by making Cranbrook children's centre and library share one venue. No doubt the library could benefit from investment and further community services, but the children of Cranbrook deserve a dedicated facility where they can play indoors AND outdoors safely and freely."

"It is not clear whether the alternative provision, in the form of a new family hub, would be relocated to the existing Cranbrook or whether it would be at the proposed new community hub on Wilkes Field, off Stone Street which has not yet been built. It also needs to be confirmed whether the new hub is able to accommodate both the co-located community services and a new library. Further clarification of this and details of any interim arrangements for alternative service provision is therefore needed before we can comment on this particular proposal. It is suggested that it may be prudent to keep the children's centre service where it is until the new community/medical hub at Wilkes Field is built and the services could then be transferred there. It is also considered that at present, the

proposal to move the children's centre service to the existing Cranbrook Library building would fail to deliver KCC's stated objectives of saving money and providing outreach services to the community, as it is considered that the co-location of library and children's services would require substantial funds for alterations to the existing library building in order to make the two services compatible here."

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## TUNBRIDGE WELLS YOUTH HUB

- 9 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- Whilst comments are few, those who use the hub consider it valuable.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**"This is a very active centre able to accommodate small groups and that school age children can walk to, can drop in to, and feel safe and welcome. It is well connected for the station and would leave no provision that side of Tunbridge Wells if it were to close."**

**"Without this we would be left with very little support."**

**"We've moved from a big town to a small town . We want our children to be on a slower pace of life. To get away from technology and look after their mental health. By going to local groups and walks and being outside. When you take away these places life becomes hectic again."**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at the Southborough Hub. 8 people attended.
- Concerns were raised transport accessibility, willingness to travel and local pockets of deprivation.

## IMPACT OF PART B 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS

### COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation for Community Services for adults with learning disabilities.

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#### NORTHGATE HUB

- 8 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“We will ALL pay for this - I am utterly distraught about any proposal to cut these services to our most vulnerable - a society is only as healthy as the way it takes care of its most vulnerable members.”**

**“No services in future when my disabled child will need them. He can't use public transport and we already use taxis as KCC has failed SEN children in multiple areas in the past. This is an extension of that disregard and de prioritisation.”**

**“Closing the Northgate hub will be detrimental as follows:- to the current people who use it and love it to Northgate Community Centre residents who use the centre every day and who welcome and love KCC Day Opportunities people.”**

#### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, a public event took place at Canterbury Library. At this event, an attendee expressed concern that there has been recent investment at the centre and that this needs to be made use of.
- At engagement events at Northgate Hub, there was concern expressed about how people would be able to travel between Prince of Wales Youth Club and Thanington.

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#### FOLKESTONE SPORTS CENTRE

- 10 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“Loss of having a service in Folkestone will be significant, potential increase in costs of travel and transport to enable people to access services elsewhere.”**

**“Folkestone Sports Centre is a highly used resource with some unique facilities in Folkestone area e.g. swimming investment and further use seems more sensible.”**

**“My sister attends this hub on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I take her there and pick her up on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the staff being her back. If she moves further away, I don't drive so she would need transport. She also likes this front room.”**

**“Why have KCC taken the decision to move the services from Folkestone Sports Centre to a facility 14 miles away, which we do not believe is fit for purpose. Can we confirm where the clients are coming from to be able to access this resource?”**

### **Engagement exercise – public events**

- As part of the consultation exercise, engagement telephone calls took place with residents who use the ‘Front Room’ at Folkestone Sports Centre. 8 people were spoken to.
- Concerns were raised about a proposed 1.5 hour return trip to proposed alternative and whether this is appropriate for client base and carers, journey times impacting on carers’ wellbeing and their other commitments and perceived difficulty in coping with change.

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### **SEVENOAKS LEISURE CENTRE**

- 10 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“Disabled people rely on the centre for fitness and socialisation with others. Mental health and physical health is provided in this centre.”**

**“The present building has an easy access for those who travel by public transport and is not for them to walk keeping up their independence.”**

**“Proposal makes sense to use buildings so long as staff feel comfortable with the change in use.”**

**“As she is familiar with that area, it won't be a problem.”**

**“Moving to the library would not cause an issue as this is a familiar building to her.”**

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### **HARTSDOWN LEISURE CENTRE**

- 10 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.



Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“Hartsdown has free parking, space and is perfect. Stop reducing what people have and telling them it's for their benefit.”**

**“This will impact on us in that it will mean receiving services from just one place instead of two areas that have different resources in the community and on site that make for variation and a good day. Instead of the same places to go every day.”**

**“The Adults with Learning Disabilities to close and place in a library or village hall, Why?? once again the already disadvantaged are punished and treated abysmally.”**

# IMPACT OF PART C 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS – THANET

## COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SKILLS (ADULT EDUCATION)

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation for Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education).

### BROADSTAIRS MEMORIAL HALL AND POTTERY

- 51 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.
- 61% of those providing a comment have concerned about the suitability of the alternative venue for the services provided.
- 33% of those making a comment indicate they use the service frequently and it is considered essential / a lifeline.
- 25% express concerns that proposals for the centre will have a detrimental impact on users' mental health / development.

**Please tell us how you think you or the people in your household will be impacted by the proposal?** Base: all answering (51)

	Number of consultees answering	% of consultees answering
Alternative venue not suitable - size/capacity / storage, i.e., pottery, fitness/exercise classes in a library?	31	61%
Use frequently / essential / needed / lifeline / do not close / lost without it / loss of access to services	17	33%
Detrimental impact of mental health / socialisation / development / counselling service much needed	13	25%
Current building in walking distance / accessible / won't be able to walk/access alternatives	8	16%
Services would suffer if moved elsewhere /insufficient provision / oversubscribed / would current services be available	8	16%
Detrimental effect on community / much needed by community	7	14%
Current building provides good facilities / parking / nice environment / not available at alternatives	3	6%

Some example verbatims to support the key themes can be found below:

**“Have current users been informed of services disappearing completely in some cases? e.g. In Broadstairs, Adult Education classes in Pottery are proposed to be moved into**

**Broadstairs Library. As far as I am aware no suitable venue/equipment is available there for this activity. Also, the rooms currently available in Broadstairs Library are unsuitable for certain fitness classes currently held in the Memorial Hall by Broadstairs Adult Education; i.e. the library rooms are too small to allow adequate spacing and are already full of furniture. The Broadstairs Library building seems an unlikely venue to fulfil my current fitness class needs. As an early-stage arthritis sufferer I am advised to practise Pilates to maintain muscle strength. My partner is elderly but still enjoys pottery classes. If this venue disappears he is unlikely to travel to another so he will miss out on this social and creative aspect of his life.”**

**“Closing the centre is one thing but the proposed building to relocate to is not suitable for the activity eg the library in Broadstairs is far too small to house the Pilates class. When we were move there last year because of the exams we had to move the tables to create a space to do the Pilates - this goes against every health and safety rule. once we had cleared a space by shifting heavy tables, it was not big enough for the 12 people in the group. we were packed in like sardines.**

**“I have been using the building and pottery for around 40 years. both as a teacher and student. It is an important part of my life. It is important for Adult learning skills and community informal networking. Of course it was impacted by the pandemic, but life is returning and even mor appreciated by many in a way that online is not. The building itself has no doubt suffered from long term lack of maintenance. No doubt it should be modernized and install solar panels at least. Retired people and other users will become even more isolated socially and this becomes more subject to mental health problems.”**

**“People in my household consider these two buildings to be a crucial part of our community. They are a place to meet, socialise, be entertained and learn. Our community will be depleted if they close. The pottery in particular is a building I use for classes on a regular basis.”**

**“Broadstairs Library is not big enough to accommodate all the curriculum offered at Broadstairs Adult Education Centre, as well as offer Library services and services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. Will have a detrimental impact on all three services and the service users accessing them. The majority of the courses at Broadstairs AEC are Creative or Health and Fitness and, as such, need large classrooms: - Pottery Studio - 80 sq m of teaching space (minimum), plus an additional 30-35 sq m of storage and kiln room, - Art/Craft Studios - need two of least 50 sq m, with additional storage. The current 'Craft room' is not large enough for most classes currently held at Broadstairs AE, - Health & Fitness - A hall large room (70 sq m) is needed for Fitness, Yoga, Pilates, Dance and Tai Chi.”**

**“I would not mind moving the Broadstairs site elsewhere but the Library is NOT a feasible option. We have 16 students in a Tai Chi class, 14 in a yoga class, across the week we generally have 10 art courses, 3 Latin and Ballroom classes, 7 keep fit classes, 4 sewing classes, + various guitar, crochet, mindfulness courses. There are also language classes that we had started to bring back into centre, plus counselling courses. And then there are the 12 pottery classes a week. Just where do you propose to put all these in the library which only has one room suitable for art and 2 small office like rooms (carpeted) for everything else. Not to mention the staff and where they will be, squeezed into the back of the toilets maybe.”**

**“I personally will be devastated by the closure of the Broadstairs pottery, it has had such a positive impact on my mental health and wellbeing. I love having a dedicated, supportive space in which to create things in clay. It makes me less anxious, more calm and generally feel good about myself. I will be so upset and lost if we lose this precious building and its offering.”**

**“Reduced access for education will cause lower educational attainments and lower socio economic prospects. This will impact on health and mental well-being for the future.”**

**“The closure and relocation of the Broadstairs Adult Education hasn't been thought through significantly enough. If the proposal is considering all the classes that currently take place at the centre then it would be obvious that the library is not a suitable alternative. There are many specialist subjects taught in the centre, they cannot be taught in general purpose rooms. The very speciality of them requires specialist equipment that cannot be moved and cannot be in a shared environment. That is why I say that the proposal hasn't been thought through. If there was a need to relocate and save money then my alternative suggestion would be to look at a site that could accommodate both the Margate and Broadstairs Adult Education. It could be an Arts Centre that allowed specialist subjects to be taught and have their own space to accommodate the activities. One such site that has been empty for years is the old University Campus in Broadstairs opposite St Georges School. This has a brilliant suite of rooms, accessible parking for all including disabled, is on a bus route, a cafe area and a defined reception area. The potential for this building is huge and would be a valued asset to any community. If you needed to relocate then may I suggest that this be a solution.”**

# IMPACT OF PART D 'LEAVE' PROPOSALS

## GATEWAYS

This section of the report summarises impact feedback from consultees for specific buildings featured in the consultation for Gateways.

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### DOVER GATEWAY

- 8 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“I hope the same resources will be available in the Dover Discovery Centre Hub that was accessible in the Dover Gateway and the all multi professional services are available on a weekly fortnightly basis etc - This is such a good resource for the Dover.”**

**“Drastically under-utilised need to make sure it is not another white elephant.”**

**“If this is closed I can’t use it for work, information and it is easier to access.”**

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### GRAVESHAM GATEWAY

- 8 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“The gateway support a wide area including Dartford as is not easily accessible for many people outside Gravesend.”**

**“I need to use both services KCC and also local council so it is easy to do both in the same building rather than having to walk around town.”**

**“I love using the services there and will be very disappointed if the gateway closes.”**

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## TONBRIDGE CASTLE GATEWAY

- 11 impact comments were received via the consultation questionnaire.

Some example verbatims can be found below:

**“Loss of yet another amenity like the Post Office.”**

**“Should be retained. This is a vital community resource that should be developed and not removed.”**

**“Accessibility, costs reliability. All support services must work in order for gateways to work. The gateways service needs an infrastructure that supports gateways by working not socially analysing people.”**

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC / ENGAGEMENT EVENT ATTENDANCE

A number of public and engagement exercises took place over the course of the consultation. Where known, approximate attendance numbers can be found below:

Event	Number attended (if known)
Margate library	5
Little Forest Children's Centre	1
Tonbridge Youth and Children's Centre	Unknown
Southborough Hub	8
Larkfield library	3
Oakfield Children's Centre	3
Deal library	18
Little Hands Children's Centre	1
Canterbury library	8
Dartford library	2
Six Bells Family Centre	5
Folkestone Early Years Centre	1
Ashford Gateway	2
Milton Court Children's Centre	6
Wood Avenue library	11
Sheppey Gateway	10
Willows Children's Centre	Unknown
Riverside Children's Centre	1
Sessions House	7
Sevenoaks library	Unknown
Swanley Youth and Community Centre	3
Gravesend library	4
St Marys Children's Centre	11
Beaches Children's Centre	6
Sunflower Children's Centre	9
Lydd'le Stars Children's Centre	30
New Ash Green Children's Centre	30
Callis Grange Children's Centre	2
Priory Children's Centre	8
Folkestone Youth Hub	10
Apple Tree Children's Centre	8
Dover Youth Hub	4

Event	Number attended (if known)
Cranbrook Children's Centre	10
Marden Children's Centre	7
Harmony Children's Centre	15
Bluebells Children's Centre	14
Little Explorers Children's Centre	10
Front Room at Folkestone Sports Centre	8
West Kingsdown Children's Centre	14
Swanley Children's Centre	17
Spring House – Pathway Play	6



## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The statistical breakdown of responses to the demographic questionnaire are included here:

### **Gender**

Male 18%

Female 81.3%

Prefer not to say 0.7%

### **Same Gender as birth**

Yes 99%

Prefer not to say 1%

### **Pregnant**

Yes – 28 out of 870 responses

### **Religion**

Christian 90.2%

Buddhist 0.3%

Hindu 0.7%

Jewish 0.7%

Muslim 0.7%

Prefer not to say 2.6%

Other 4.9%

Sikh 0%

### **Disability**

Yes 14.3 %

No 83.5%

Prefer not to say 2.2%

### **Sexual Orientation**

Heterosexual/Straight 89.7%

Bi/Bisexual 2%

Gay man 0.4%

Gay woman/Lesbian 1.3%

Prefer not to say 6%

Other 0.6%

### **Ethnicity**

White English 87.6%

White Scottish 1.1%

White Welsh 0.5%

White Northern Irish 0.2%

White Irish 0.7%

White Gipsy/Roma 0.1%

Asian or Asian British Indian 0.4%

Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi 0.1%

Mixed White and Black Caribbean 0.1%

Mixed White and Black African 0.1%

Mixed White and Asian 0.4%

Black or Black British Caribbean 0.2%

Black or Black British African 0.1%

I prefer not to say 2.2%

Other 6%

White Irish Traveller 0%

Asian or Asian British Pakistani 0%

Arab 0%

Chinese 0%

This report was produced for Kent County Council