



KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SEASHELLS AND MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB CONSULTATION WRITTEN REPORT

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH



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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background

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

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

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

Consultation process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Points to note

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

Profile of **resident consultees** responding

1,016 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profile of **professionals / organisation** consultees responding

95 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESIDENT FEEDBACK – SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

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

RESIDENT FEEDBACK – MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

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

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

PROFESSIONAL / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK – SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

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

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

PROFESSIONAL / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK – MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

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

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

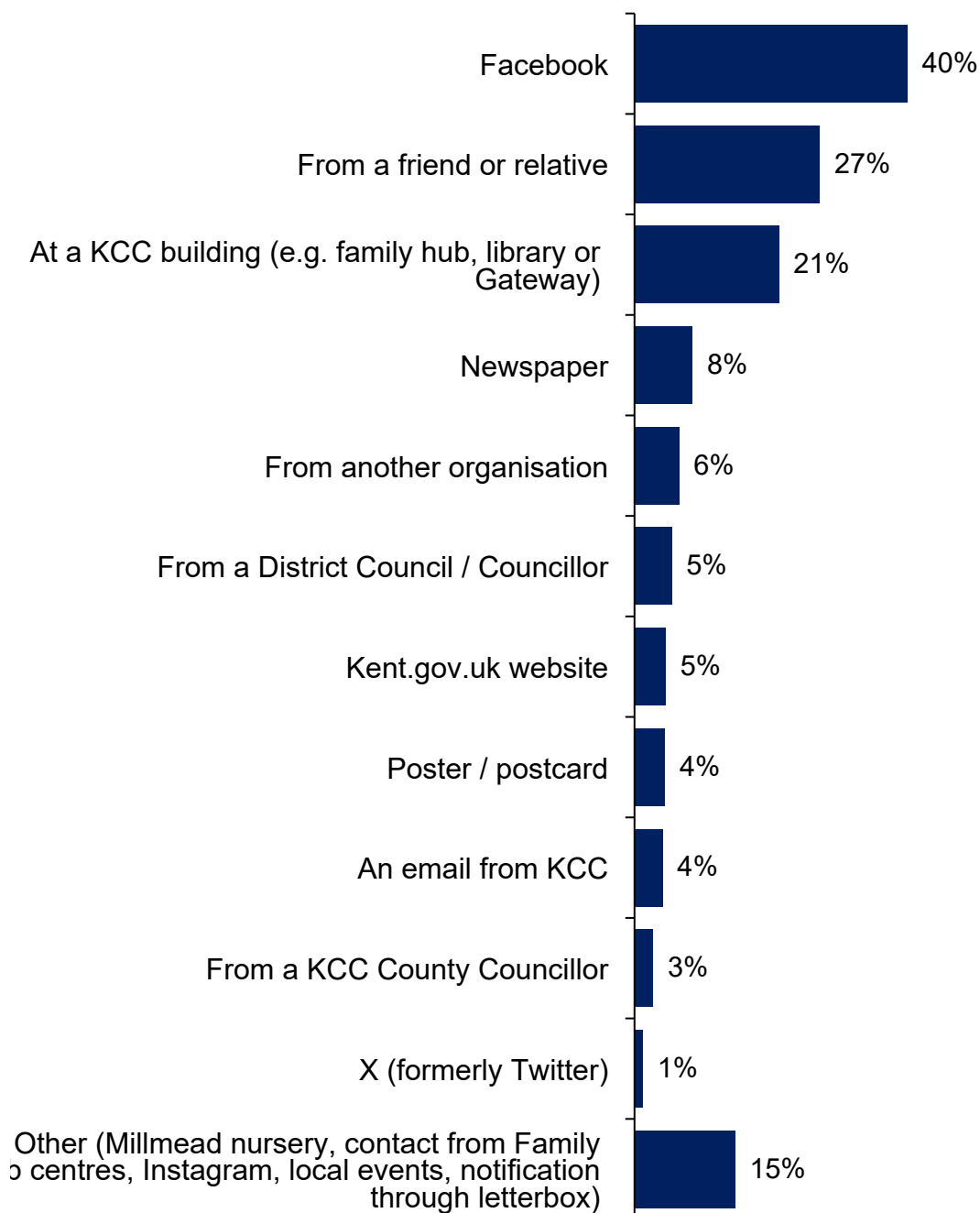
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

CONSULTATION AWARENESS

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

How did you find out about this consultation?

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



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

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

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

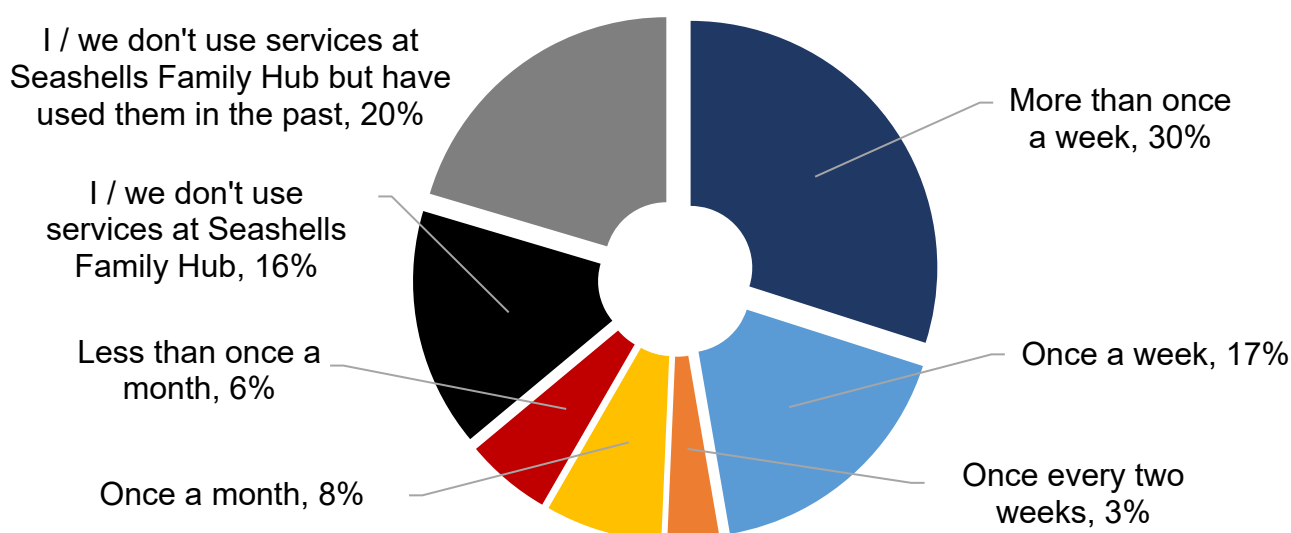
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

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

FREQUENCY OF USING SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Differences in response by resident demographic

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

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FOR SEASHELLS FAMILY HUB PROPOSAL

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

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

Base: all answering (301)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

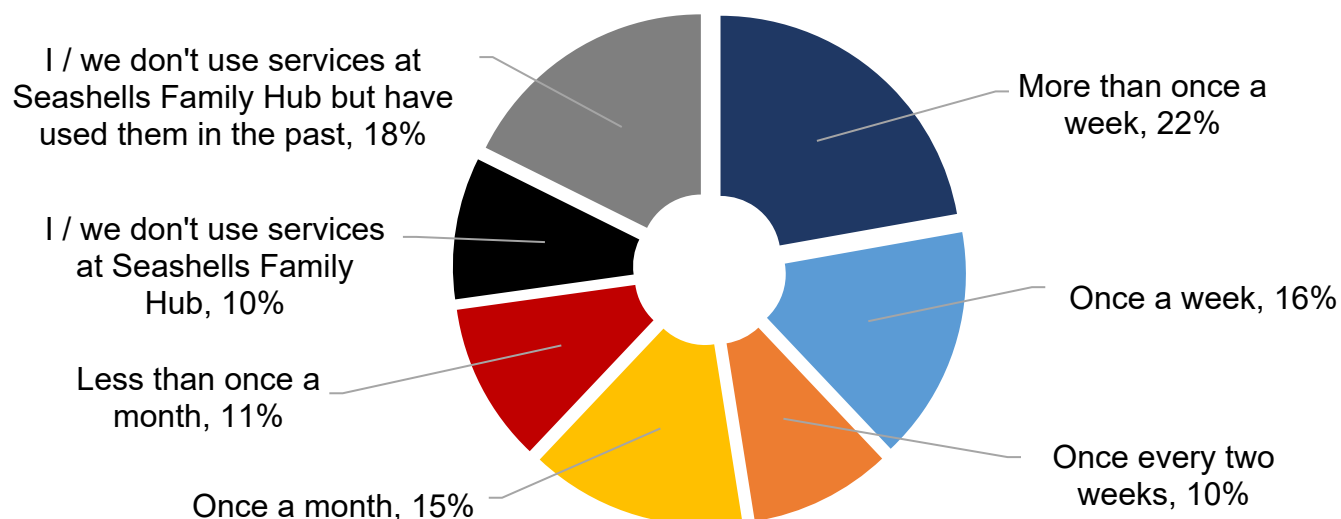
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

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

FREQUENCY OF USING MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Differences in response by resident demographic

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

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FOR MILLMEAD FAMILY HUB PROPOSAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESIDENT FEEDBACK

ANY OTHER PROPOSAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

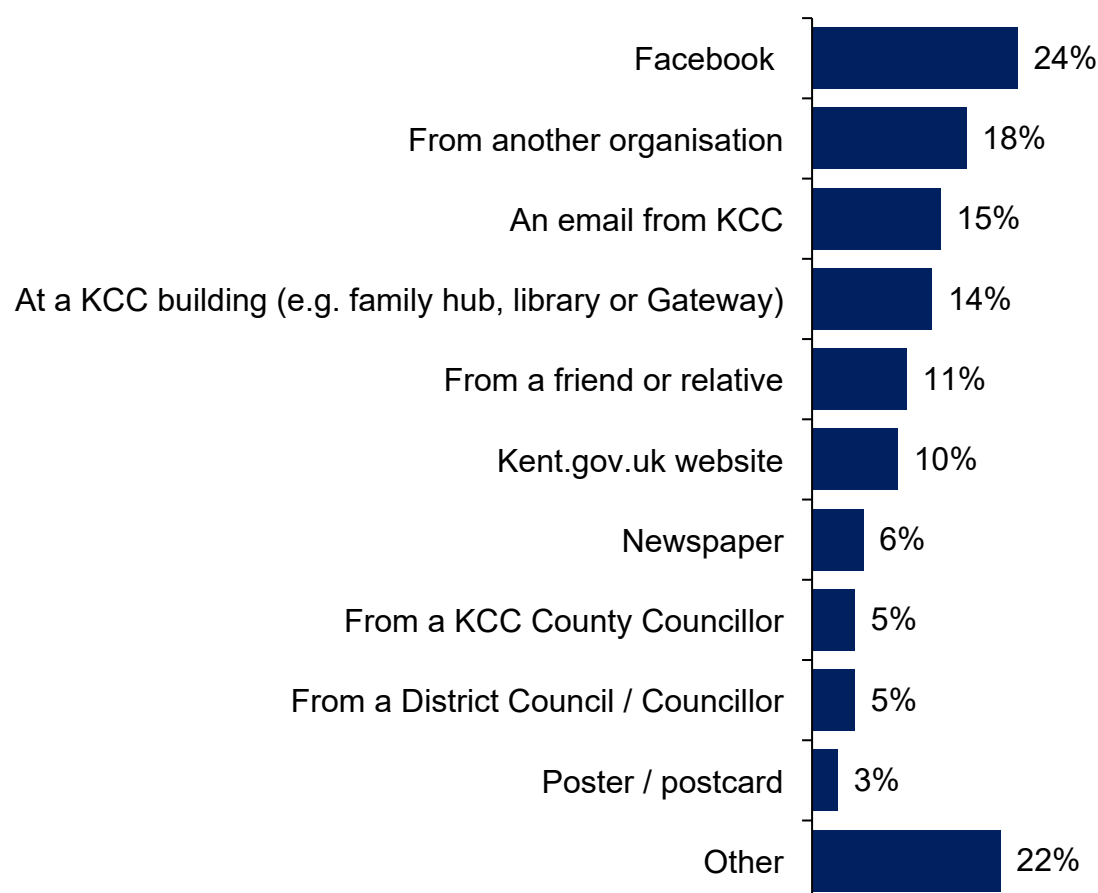
PROFESSIONALS / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK

CONSULTATION AWARENESS

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

How did you find out about this consultation?

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EQUALITY ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EQUALITY ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

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

PROFESSIONALS / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK

ANY OTHER PROPOSAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEXT STEPS

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

