

Retford (North) Children's Centre Community consultation – Main Report

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Questionnaire completion.....	3
The Focus Group.....	5
Partners' Views.....	7
Main Report.....	8
1. Background to the Research.....	8
2. Aim and Objectives of the consultation	9
3. Methodology.....	10
3.1 Parents' Questionnaire.....	10
3.2 Partners' Questionnaire.....	11
3.3 Focus Group.....	12
4. Observations on the Samples	12
4.1 Parents' Questionnaire.....	12
4.2 Partners' Questionnaire.....	13
4.3 Focus Group.....	13
5. Main Findings.....	15
5.1 Parents' Questionnaire.....	15
5.1.1. Services Ever Used.....	15
5.1.2. Usefulness of Services.....	16
5.1.3. Reasons given for services mentioned as being not useful.....	18
5.1.4. Child-friendliness of Services.....	18
5.1.5. Reasons given for services mentioned as being not child friendly.....	19
5.1.6. Comparing scores for usefulness and child-friendliness.....	20
5.1.7. Most helpful service to parent.....	21
5.1.8. Most helpful service to child/children.....	22
5.1.9. Help to use services more often.....	23
5.1.10. Preferences for receiving information.....	23
5.1.11. Reaction to the proposed Children's Centre for Retford (North).....	24
5.1.12. Three things Retford (North) needs to make it better for families.....	24
5.2 Partners' questionnaire.....	26
5.2.1. Current problems or gaps in services.....	26
5.2.2. Likely impact of the Children's Centre.....	26
5.2.3. Biggest Challenge in developing the Children's Centre.....	26
5.2.4. Effectiveness of existing meetings between services.....	27
5.2.5. Top Priorities for Retford (North).....	27
5.3 Focus Group.....	29
5.3.1. Local Services Reviewed.....	29
5.3.2. Services most helpful to the child.....	31
5.3.3. Child-friendliness of local services.....	31
5.3.4. Gaps in services and ideas for improvements.....	33
5.3.5. Ideas and concerns about the Children's Centre.....	33
5.3.6. Issues arising from the focus group.....	34
6. Key messages for the future.....	36
7. Appendices.....	37

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire has been given the approval to develop 22 Children's Centres in the county by March 2006, to provide services and support to children, aged from 0-5 years, their parents and carers, based on partnerships between statutory, voluntary and private organisations and the local authority, and involving local parents in the planning, delivery, management and evaluation of their local Children's Centre.
2. All Children's Centres will provide day-care, with a qualified early years teacher leading the curriculum, with some day care places reserved for local families. Other core services are support to child minders, play and early learning for the 0-3s, health and family support, and opportunities to access training and employment.
3. The overall purpose of the consultation in Retford (North), as elsewhere, was to inform the community about the forthcoming Children's Centre development, determine the views of parents, carers and partners, to identify knowledge and views of current services and the perceived needs for the future for families; to involve parents, carers and partners in developing future services for the community, and use the output from the consultation to help in the development of the delivery plan for Retford (North) Children's Centre.
4. The full report discusses the consultation in greater detail; the report, with appendices, is available from Diane Tinklin, Children's Centre Team or Janet Lang, Consultant, or will shortly be available as a pdf file from www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/eydcp/childrenscentres.

Questionnaire completion

5. After initial meetings with partners to explain the purpose and process of the consultation, self-completion questionnaires gathering their views were completed and returned by 9 service providers.
6. Members of the Children's Centre team and local workers conducted interviews with 67 parents and carers, of whom 35 volunteered to take part in the planned focus group, to be held in Retford (North) the following month. This is an indication of the keen interest shown by parents.
7. Caution should be exercised in comparing percentages, as some questions received low responses.
8. The majority of respondents fell into either the under 29-age group (36%) or 30-39 age group (46%), and all were female. Some 81% of respondents had children under 5, and none said that they were pregnant at the time.
9. 51% stated they were working either full or part-time, and 87% were either married or partnered. The average number of people aged 18+ living in the household was 2.0 people.
10. Asked about their ethnic background, all respondents who answered the question - the majority of respondents- described their ethnic origin as white.
11. Asked about local services ever used, the highest scoring were:
 - Health visitors (used by 91% of respondents)

- GP practice (90%)
 - Nursery in a school (85%)
12. This was followed by services mainly for children, and informal help with child care from family and friends:
- Toddler group (72%)
 - Midwife (64%)
 - Pre-school playgroup (51%)
 - Children’s Library service (48%)
 - Ante-natal sessions (42%)
 - Family member (42%)

All other services scored 25 % or less i.e. 1/4 or less of respondents claimed to use the service as listed. (See table 3 in main report)

13. Respondents were asked how useful, and how child-friendly, they had found the service they’d mentioned. From the results, an average (or mean) score was calculated showing which service was most highly rated, with 5 being the highest possible score. (See tables 4 & 6 in main report)
14. The following scores show that these services tended to be very highly rated, along both dimensions but that those targeted more specifically at children were considered more child-friendly than health services. (Average of 4.8 compared to 4.1)
15. Similarly, the average mean score for usefulness for health services is 4.3 compared to 4.6 for averaged child-centred services.

	Numbers using service	% Ever used	Mean score* - usefulness	Mean score* - child-friendly
Health visitors	61	91	4.2	4.3
GP practice	60	90	4.4	3.9
Nursery in a school	57	85	4.8	4.9
Toddler Group	48	72	4.4	4.5
Midwife	43	64	4.6	4.3
Pre-school playgroup	34	51	4.4	4.8
Children’s Library Service	32	48	4.5	4.5
Antenatal sessions	28	42	4.0	3.8
Family member	28	42	4.9	5.0

*Of those giving a response, excluding ‘Don’t know/no response’, where 5= Very useful, 4 = quite useful, 3 = neither, 2 = not useful, 1 = not at all useful

16. Comparing the mean scores for usefulness and child-friendliness for these services, it can be seen that the GP practice is viewed as more ‘useful’ than it is ‘child friendly’.
17. Reasons given for perceived shortcomings for any of the services included the lack of a child-friendly play area and toys, difficulties in talking confidentially in front of the children, negative or patronising attitudes on behalf of receptionists, long waiting times and lack of patience with the child (See table 6 in main report). However, responses were very low.

18. The most helpful service cited by parents for themselves from the list shown was, by a considerable margin, Nursery in a school (24%), followed by Midwife (7%), Childminder (7%), Family Member (7%), Breast-feeding Group (6%) and GP Practice (6%).
19. The most helpful service for the child was again said to be Nursery in a school (36%), followed by Pre-school Playgroup (10%) and Health Visitor (6%).
20. Parents suggested that better public transport would help them to use services more often, followed by better childcare and different times of events. Better public transport was important to younger parents, while childcare was more of an issue for older respondents. (See table 10 in main report)
21. The preference for receiving information tended to be by newsletter or flyer/information sheet, followed by word-of-mouth information from local professionals such as health visitors or nursery school staff. (See table 11 in main report)
22. Asked what 3 things Retford (North) would need to make it better for parents with young children, the most frequently suggested ideas focused on play and leisure activities for all children, including older ones, indicative of the concerns of respondents who feel that the lack of facilities for older children impacts on their younger children. More mother and toddler groups and more provision for children to be looked after before and after school and during the school holidays were other priorities stated by the parents. (See table 12)

The Focus Group

23. Eleven parents were subsequently selected at random from the 35 willing parents/carers for the focus group, of whom 6 took part.
24. Most respondents had more than one child and had lived in the area for some time. They carried out a mapping of services and activities during the focus group. This demonstrated an uneven awareness of available services within the group.
25. On the whole, the findings reflected the results from the questionnaire, including the call for more information about available services.
26. These mothers also wanted more information about alternative and complementary therapies for their children.
27. Some dissatisfaction was expressed about out-of-hours care provided by local GPs during emergencies involving their children, and one mother felt that she had received little support from her doctor when she had suffered from postnatal depression.
28. The lack of crèche facilities at the Leisure Centre was felt to limit its usefulness to parents, and there was concern that leisure facilities would be reduced when the Leisure Centre opened after its refurbishment.
29. Breast-feeding support was identified as a service that had proved particularly beneficial, both practically and emotionally.
30. It was emphasised that breast-feeding support is equally necessary for second and subsequent children, although this was not always recognised by healthcare professionals.

31. The parents agreed about the valuable role played by the school-based nursery in their children's development but they also believed that their children needed more safe, open spaces for unstructured play.
32. They said that public amenities in Retford were generally not child-friendly. It was difficult to find anywhere to change or breast-feed their young children, and the toilets in the centre of town were poorly lit and inaccessible to pushchairs.
33. Facilities for changing and occupying children at GPs' surgeries and at the Job Centre were also described as very limited.
34. Irregular bus services and the lack of buses with drop-down floors to accommodate pushchairs added to the difficulties of parents travelling into the town centre.
35. The main ideas for improvements or additional services to the area from this group of parents were:
 - Better-maintained parks and more access to open land
 - Communal allotments to promote self-sufficiency and healthy eating
 - Better facilities for the 10-15 age group, particularly a youth club
 - Better toilet facilities in public spaces, shops and surgeries
 - An up-grading of the local bus service.
36. The parents put forward many imaginative ideas about how the children's Centre might help local parents and children, including:
 - Baby yoga and massage
 - Classes on different cultures and religions
 - Advice and guidance at all stages of a child's development, and help in learning to play with babies
 - A local information exchange
 - Toddler groups for grandparents and grandchildren.
37. Some concerns were expressed about aspects of the Children's Centre and its impact on the immediate neighbourhood.
38. The parents were particularly anxious about parking and about the security of the Children's Centre building.
39. Other concerns were how the development would affect the appearance of the school and whether the Children's Centre would continue to be supported by central government funding over the longer term.

Partners' Views

40. Some of the views of partners were similar to those expressed by parents both in the questionnaire and the focus group.
41. For example, they identified a need for 'wrap-around care', such as after-school care and, more generally, for affordable childcare.
42. They also deplored the poor maintenance and security of outdoor play facilities.
43. In addition, they saw a need for better local access to specialist services, such as speech and language therapy and child and family therapy.
44. They felt that parental support should include training, back-to-work advice, help with library and internet access, and information on benefits and grants.

45. They were generally optimistic about the impact of the Children's Centre, anticipating that, through improved co-ordination and localised delivery, services would become more accessible and better targeted. They believed that the Children's Centre would offer a readily identifiable focal point for the provision of specialist services.
46. There were some practical concerns about the operation of the Children's Centre, notably around access, parking and the prevention of vandalism.
47. The partners were also concerned about whether the Children's Centre would effectively be able to serve both Hallcroft and Carr Hill.
48. Their replies suggested that more needs to be done in the area to promote partnership working and parental involvement.
49. The partners' priorities for the area reflected both the substantive services they wished to see in place, such as affordable and flexible childcare, and the approaches they would like to see adopted by service providers. Thus, for example, they wanted *"balance in providing services that don't patronise or make people feel threatened."*
50. A partner who was a childminder expressed concern that the Children's Centre might actually reduce care choices for young children by eroding the position of local childminders.

Main Report

1. Background to the Research

- In line with the government's current initiative to introduce Children's Centres into communities which fall within the top 20% of disadvantaged wards nationally, Nottinghamshire has been given the go-ahead for 22 centres to be completed by March 2006, with 2 more to be started in Round One, but completed in Round Two by 2007.
- Children's Centres are intended to provide services and support to children, aged from 0-5 years, their parents and carers, based on partnerships between statutory, voluntary and private organisations and the local authority.
- It is the government's policy to develop Children's Centres within partnerships. Some may be based on a 'strong link' partnership, bringing together existing facilities (e.g. neighbourhood nursery, infants and junior schools, family centre). Some may involve a new building, creating a one-stop centre attached to or on a school site. Even with a new 'one stop building', there will be a need for sound partnerships with other providers throughout the area.
- All Children's Centres will provide day-care, with a qualified early years teacher leading the curriculum. Some day care places in each centre will be reserved for families in the immediate locality.
- Work in conjunction with existing Sure Start programmes is in hand, both to learn from their experience and ensure that remaining capital is spent in a timely and cohesive manner.
- Depending on the variable position in childcare, education and other support in local communities, parents/carers and other residents are likely to have different experiences, and therefore will have variable views and feelings about the advent of a Children's Centre in their community.
- Understanding the views of both users and providers, who may be affected in the short and longer term by the implementation of the programme, is vital to ensure that the rollout of Children's Centres is successful and well received within communities.
- Central to the development of Children's Centres is parental involvement and participation, leading to parental involvement in the management and governance of the centres, as appropriate structures emerge.
- Development of the Children's Centres is for families with children under 5; the centres have the potential for wider community use however and could develop into 'community centres for children' serving a wider age-range and incorporating, for example, after school care, holiday clubs etc., if appropriate
- The interviews and the focus group were conducted in an inclusive manner where at all possible, to enable any parent, worker or member of the community who wished to take part in the consultation to do so. The team aimed to comply with equal opportunities policies and principles throughout the consultation.
- Where possible, hard-to-reach families have been included, where service providers or other agencies were able to give contact details and encourage participation.

2. Aim and Objectives of the consultation

- Overall Aim:
 - to find out parents' and carers' views and opinions of services on offer for families and young children in their area and how best their requirements can be met in the future with the development of Children's Centres.
 - to involve community members and partners in planning together to develop the optimal Children's Centre services for the community.

Specific objectives are:

- i. To identify current provision of child care, education, health services, family support, leisure facilities and other services relevant to young children and their families, through existing sources where these exist, such as Children's Information Service (CIS), databases or local knowledge
- ii. To identify gaps in the current provision of these services through the involvement and knowledge of service providers, and through discussion with local parents and the community
- iii. To determine which known services on offer are used by parents/carers
- iv. To determine levels of use of services amongst local parents/carers
- v. To gather information on how parents/carers rate the current services used and to seek views on how service delivery could be improved locally
- vi. To understand the likely take-up amongst local parents/carers of the proposed Children's Centre
- vii. To determine an appropriate mechanism for receiving and disseminating information from different local groups
- viii. To identify local anxieties/perceptions/expectations and potential problems for a new Children's Centre amongst parents/carers and partners
- ix. To establish appropriate benchmarks for future research and evaluation
- x. To conduct communications with parents in such a way that future involvement and participation in Children's Centres is encouraged and promoted
- xi. To use the information gathered in the consultation to help create the delivery plan

3. Methodology

The consultation consisted of face-to-face interviews with parents to complete a questionnaire; one focus group with parents recruited via the questionnaire; a written questionnaire distributed to service providers and key stakeholders in the area, who were also invited to include a list of services in the area;

3.1 Parents' Questionnaire

- The initial phase of the consultation consisted of interviews with parents. It was planned to include:
 - *Parents/carers with children at local schools*
 - *Parent/carers who are users of local toddler groups and other sessions for parents and young children*

- *Parents/carers living locally*
- *Local resident*
-
- Interviews were conducted on 10th March.
- The venues were:
 - Hallcroft Infants School
 - Claremont Day Nursery
 - Carr Hill Primary School
 - West Street Play Group
 - Family Centre outreach session (also at West Street play group)

The interviews were carried out by workers from the Children's Centre team, assisted by a Community Development Worker from Nottinghamshire County Council, and workers from the Albion Family Centre (Worksop) and the Children's Fund. A briefing session was held prior to interviewing parents. Large supplies of Sure Start balloons were blown up to help announce the arrival of the teams at interviewing locations.

- The questionnaire included an incentive prize draw for a child's Arts & Crafts Set, and an invitation to take part in the planned focus group. Contacts details were taken where given, but this sheet was kept separate from the completed questionnaire.
- In addition to the interviews, a display stand was erected in the school, staffed by the Children's Centre Development Team, to provide information to local residents and an opportunity to engage their views. This was followed up by a further event on 17th May from 3-6 pm as part of the Pre-Planning Permission Consultation.

3.2 Partners' Questionnaire

- Partners, key stakeholders and service providers were informed about the planned consultation in Retford (North) at a meeting on 3rd March at Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School. The partner's questionnaire, consisting of open-ended questions, was used as a discussion guide for the meeting and those present were given copies to take away and complete independently. They were encouraged to return them by 18th March 2005.
- Each person at the meeting was also asked to complete a mapping exercise, giving details of the services of which they were aware in Retford (North), with times and contact details.
- It was hoped to use this to develop a map of services available in the area to identify any service provision gaps or overlaps.
- Other child care providers in Retford (North) were also sent the questionnaire, with an explanatory sheet about developments in the area. The opportunity to give contact details was given so that the team could make contact in the future; most respondents completed this section.

3.3 Focus Group

- Respondents for the focus group were recruited from the indication in the tick-box on the contact details sheet of the parent's questionnaire, showing their agreement to take part. A good response to this was received with some 35 offering to take part.
- Parents were contacted at random from the resulting list, and 11 agreed to come along to Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School on 20th April 2005 between 1.00 pm and 3.00 pm. A free crèche was provided by Mansfield Play Forum, funded by Nottinghamshire County Council, for those parents who wished to use it. They were offered a £10 Wilkinson voucher as a thank-you for taking part in the focus group.
- A letter of information, confirming venue and time details, and forms for completion for the crèche were sent to these parents beforehand.
- The day before the group was due to take place each respondent was telephoned as a reminder to attend.
- In the event, 6 of the 11 whose attendance had been confirmed turned up to the focus group session.
- A mapping exercise was conducted as part of the focus group to gather knowledge about existing services for them and their children in the area.
- As part of the introduction to the group, an explanation about Children's Centres was given. This was seen as a good way of enabling a wider understanding of the concept to be gained by the parents before the discussion started.
- Parents were also reassured on issues raised within the fieldwork, such as security and car parking.

4. Observations on the Samples

4.1 Parents' Questionnaire

- 67 interviews were completed with parents/carers in the various interviewing points.
- All the respondents were female
- The majority (46%) were aged between 30 and 39 years, with 36% being under 29. 11 (16%) respondents were over 40: these included one grandmother collecting children from school.
- More than half (51%) of respondents had one child under 5 in the household. A quarter (25%) had two under fives but only four people had three or more

children of this age. 15% of respondents were reported as having no children under 5 in the household.

- More than a third (37%) of respondents had 1 child aged 5-16 years in their household; 13% had two; and just 4% had three. 55% were reported as having no children in this age group.
- Children aged 16+ were found in only two families.
- Between them, respondents had 136 children; the number of families with 1 child was 16, the number with 2 children was 29, and 11 families had 3 children. Six families had 4 children, and one family had 5. 2 respondents said they had no children living with them, and 2 did not respond to the question.
- The total number of children aged under 5 in families interviewed was 81, the number of 5-16s was 52, while the number aged 16+ was 3.
- Given that 67 interviews were completed, this gives the average (mean) number of children of respondents interviewed as 2.1¹.
- None of the respondents reported that they were expecting a baby at that time.
- While only 12% of respondents were working full-time, many more (39%) worked part-time, and only one person described herself as unemployed. In addition, more than half (55%) described themselves as Parent/Carers. One described herself as a grandparent.
- 87% of respondents were either married or partnered, while 12% were single.
- Most households (76%) had 2 adults aged over 18 living together in the household, while 13% of respondents lived in households of only one adult. 10% reported having 3 or more adults in the household. The average was 2.0 people in the household aged 18+.
- The ethnic composition of the respondents was 100% White.
- All respondents' postcodes fell into DN22.

4.2 Partners' Questionnaire

- 9 completed questionnaires were received from service providers in the Retford (North) area, all of which gave contact details.
- As the table below shows, all but one of the partners worked in the field of pre-school development and early years education.

Table 1 – Partners' settings

Discipline	No. of responses
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¹ This is likely to be slightly higher if those respondents, who did not answer the question about numbers of children, do actually have children in these age groups.

Pre-school development and early years education	8
Local council	1

- The roles which service-providers performed are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Partners’ roles

Infant and nursery school headteacher/teacher (x2)
Day nursery proprietor/supervisor (x3)
Pre-school playgroup supervisor (x2)
Childminder
Local councillor

- The respondents were very well-established in their current roles, between them possessing an impressive 92 years’ experience, with an average of 10.2 years.
- Other information was captured from partners at the meeting held on March 6th and from partners on subsequent occasions.

4.3 Focus Group

- 6 of the 11 recruited parents, all of whom were mothers, attended the focus group.
- Between them, the total number of children was 12, five of whom were aged 5 or under.
- Two mothers had three children, two had two children and two had one child.
- This gives an average of 2.0 children, very close to the reported average of 2.1 seen in the total number of questionnaire interviews.
- One of the mothers commuted to London each weekend to a job in the leisure industry which enabled her to compress full-time hours into a three day period. Four others were working part-time locally, one at North Notts College and two at a supermarket. A mother with a new baby was not working at the time but hoped to return to college in due course to complete her hairdressing qualification.
- One mother was about to begin a breast-feeding support worker course.

Main Findings

5.1 Parents' Questionnaire

- Altogether 67 questionnaires were completed, which was below the target of 78. Some questions were answered by only a small number of respondents, so care must be taken when comparing percentages.
- Well over half (61%) of respondents said that they knew about Sure Start.
- 30% did not know, while 9% were not sure.
- An encouraging 58% said that they knew about the proposed Children's Centre for Retford (North), while 40% did not know or were not sure.

5.1.1 Services ever used

- All respondents were asked which local services they had ever used, by means of a Showcard (see Appendix 2). Their responses are shown in Table 3.
- Responses are shown for all respondents; and for comparison purposes, by those who claimed to be aware of Sure Start.
- Care must be taken where numbers responding are low, as these may not typically reflect the views of all local people.

Table 3 – Services ever used

Service	Number ever used service N=67	% ever used service	% Sure-Start-aware respondents using service
Health visitors	61	91	95
GP practice	60	90	95
Nursery in a school	57	85	85
Toddler Group	48	72	68
Midwife	43	64	66
Pre-school playgroup	34	51	54
Children's Library Service	32	48	56
Antenatal sessions	28	42	51
Family member	28	42	46
Speech therapy	16	24	22
Friends	15	22	29
Further Education	14	21	29
Breastfeeding group	13	19	22
After School Club	12	18	15
Home Visits	11	16	20
Childminder	9	13	22
Day Nursery	8	12	12
Parenting Advice & guidance	6	9	10

Home Safety Equipment	5	7	7
Job Centre	5	7	7
Children's Information Service	4	6	10
Dietician/nutritionist	4	6	7
Toy Library	4	6	10
Independent School	2	3	2
Crèche	2	3	5
Homestart	2	3	5
Breakfast Club	1	1	2
Family Centre	1	1	2
Welfare Rights sessions	1	1	2

Shaded areas represent a percentage higher than the total.

- This shows that the health visitors and the GP practice were the most frequently used service at 91% and 90% respectively of all respondents.
- Among those services focused on young children, a school-based nursery was more widely used than toddler groups, pre-school playgroups, a day nursery or childminders.
- For the majority of services, levels of use were higher among respondents who were aware of Sure Start.

5.1.2 Usefulness of Services

- Respondents were then asked how **useful** they'd found the services they'd mentioned, for themselves and their family.
- By service mentioned in the previous question, responses were as shown in Table 4.
- The average (mean) score indicates the level of usefulness found by respondents, and the closeness to 5.0 indicates the level of satisfaction.
- However, care must be taken with the low numbers of responses for some services, as resulting percentages are not necessarily representative of views of all. For example, while the Breakfast Club, the Family Centre and the Welfare Rights sessions score 100% Very Useful, these were used by only 1 person in each case.

Table 4 – Usefulness of services ever used

	Numbers	Very	Quite	Not	Average
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Service	using service	useful %	useful %	useful / not at all useful %	score*
Health visitors	61	52	25	7	4.2
GP practice	60	55	33	2	4.4
Nursery in a school	57	75	25	0	4.8
Toddler Group	48	52	38	0	4.4
Midwife	43	70	19	0	4.6
Pre-school playgroup	34	53	35	0	4.4
Children's Library Service	32	63	28	0	4.5
Antenatal sessions	28	39	25	8	4.0
Family member	28	93	4	0	4.9
Speech therapy	16	88	0	6	4.6
Friends	15	80	13	0	4.9
Further Education	14	71	29	0	4.7
Breastfeeding group	13	54	31	1	4.3
After School Club	12	50	33	8	4.3
Home Visits	11	45	36	0	4.6
Childminder	9	89	11	0	4.9
Day Nursery	8	88	0	0	4.8
Parenting Advice & guidance	6	33	33	17	3.8
Home Safety Equipment	5	60	0	0	4.5
Job Centre	5	40	40	0	4.2
Children's Information Service	4	25	25	0	3.8
Dietician/nutritionist	4	25	0	25	3.0
Toy Library	4	25	25	0	3.8
Independent School	2	100	0	0	5.0
Crèche	2	100	0	0	5.0
Homestart	2	50	50	0	4.5
Breakfast Club	1	100	0	0	5.0
Family Centre	1	100	0	0	5.0
Welfare Rights sessions	1	100	0	0	5.0

* Of those giving a response, excluding 'Don't know/no response', where 5= Very useful, 4 = quite useful, 3 = neither, 2 = not useful, 1 = not at all useful

- This indicates generally high levels of satisfaction about the usefulness of services, with many several achieving maximum scores and few falling below a '4' score.
- The lowest scores were given to the Parenting Advice and Guidance, the Children's Information Service, the Dietician/Nutritionist and the Toy Library, but even these services were close to being assessed as 'quite useful', and caution

must in any case be exercised in interpreting the findings because of the relatively small numbers of respondents using these services.

5.1.3 Reasons given for services mentioned as not being useful

- Respondents were asked about a service they had mentioned as being not useful or not at all useful, and why this was so.
- The response was very low (12 in total) reflecting the high level of satisfaction generally recorded.
- Most of these people did not give a reason for the services not being useful.
- Where a response was recorded, dissatisfaction with appointments was mentioned by one person and a poor response from the health visitor by 3 people.

5.1.4 Child-friendliness of services

- Respondents were asked how child-friendly they had found the services.
- By service mentioned in the previous question, responses were as shown in Table 5.
- Again the average score gives an indication of the level of child friendliness felt by respondents, the closeness to 5.0 indicating the level of satisfaction.
- Caution should again be shown when looking at low response numbers.

Table 5 – Child-friendliness of services ever used

Service	Numbers using service	Very child friendly %	Quite child friendly %	Not child friendly / not at all child friendly %	Average score*
Health visitors	61	52	16	5	4.3
GP practice	60	33	20	7	3.9
Nursery in a school	57	79	9	0	4.9
Toddler Group	48	54	15	0	4.5
Midwife	43	42	9	2	4.3
Pre-school playgroup	34	74	15	0	4.8
Children's Library Service	32	56	22	3	4.5
Antenatal sessions	28	29	7	7	3.8
Family member	28	93	0	0	5.0
Friends	15	80	7	0	4.9
Speech therapy	16	81	6	0	4.9
Further Education	14	36	0	7	4.1
Breastfeeding group	13	62	0	0	4.6
After School Club	12	75	17	0	4.8
Home Visits	11	55	18	0	4.8
Childminder	9	89	11	0	4.9

Day Nursery	8	75	0	0	4.7
Parenting Advice & guidance	6	17	17	17	3.3
Home Safety Equipment	5	40	0	0	4.0
Job Centre	5	20	0	60	2.3
Children's Information Service	4	0	25	0	4.0
Dietician/nutritionist	4	25	0	75	2.5
Toy Library	4	25	25	0	4.0
Independent School	2	100	0	0	5.0
Crèche	2	100	0	0	5.0
Homestart	2	50	50	0	4.5
Breakfast Club	1	100	0	0	5.0
Family Centre	1	100	0	0	5.0
Welfare Rights sessions	1	100	0	0	5.0

Of those giving a response, excluding 'Don't know/no response', where 5= Very child-friendly, 4 = quite child-friendly, 3 = neither, 2 = not child-friendly, 1 = not at all child-friendly.

- Interestingly, the range of scores for child-friendliness is greater over the whole range of services than those for usefulness. The Job Centre, dietician/nutritionist, parenting advice and guidance, antenatal sessions and the GP practice appear at the lower end of the scale, while at the other extreme there are several services achieving maximum or near-maximum scores. However, the previous caveat about the interpretation of very small numbers applies in several cases.
- The relatively low scores for the GP practice echo comments made by respondents in the focus group (see below).

5.1.5 Reasons given for services mentioned as not being child-friendly

- Respondents were asked about a service they had mentioned as being not child friendly or not at all child friendly, and why this was so.
- 17 responses were recorded and the principal reasons given are presented in Table 6.
- The lack of a child-friendly environment with a play area and toys to keep children occupied emerges as the leading factor.

Table 6 – Reasons for being not child friendly or not at all child friendly

Service	Number of responses	% of those responding
No child-friendly play area or toys	7	41
Patronising/negative receptionist	2	13
Difficult to talk/need separate room for children	1	6

Not helpful/no interest in or patience with child	1	6
Long wait for appointment/still waiting	1	6
Other	4	24
Don't know / no response	4	24

5.1.6 Comparing scores for usefulness and child friendliness

- Matching the average scores of respondents' views of parent and child's needs gives the following:

Table 7 – Comparison of parent and child average (mean) scores

Service	Average score* Usefulness	Average score* Child friendliness	Difference
Health visitors	4.2	4.3	-0.1
GP practice	4.4	3.9	0.5
Nursery in a school	4.8	4.9	-0.1
Toddler Group	4.4	4.5	-0.1
Midwife	4.6	4.3	0.3
Pre-school playgroup	4.4	4.8	-0.4
Children's Library Service	4.5	4.5	0.0
Antenatal sessions	4.0	3.8	0.2
Family member	4.9	5.0	-0.1
Speech therapy	4.6	4.9	-0.3
Friends	4.9	4.9	0.0
Further Education	4.7	4.1	0.6
Breastfeeding group	4.3	4.6	-0.3
After School Club	4.3	4.8	-0.5
Home Visits	4.6	4.8	-0.2
Childminder	4.9	4.9	0.0
Day Nursery	4.8	4.7	0.1
Parenting Advice & guidance	3.8	3.3	0.5
Home Safety Equipment	4.5	4.0	0.5
Job Centre	4.2	2.3	1.9
Children's Information Service	3.8	4.0	-0.2
Dietician/nutritionist	3.0	2.5	0.5
Toy Library	3.8	4.0	-0.2
Independent School	5.0	5.0	0.0
Crèche	5.0	5.0	0.0

Homestart	4.5	4.5	0.0
Breakfast Club	5.0	5.0	0.0
Family Centre	5.0	5.0	0.0
Welfare Rights sessions	5.0	5.0	0.0

- The closer to an average score of 5, the more 'useful' or 'child-friendly' a service is considered to be. The difference is shown in bold when the service is more 'child-friendly' than 'useful'.
- The GP practice is viewed as more slightly more useful than it is child friendly, while the health visitors are viewed as marginally more child-friendly than useful. The differences in scores are quite small across the 28 services listed, with 9 being rated equally for usefulness and child-friendliness.
- The weighting towards usefulness is greatest for the Job Centre and Further Education, while the weighting towards child friendliness is greatest for the After-School Club and the Pre-School Playgroup.

5.1.7 Most helpful service to parent

- Respondents were asked to say which one out of the services they had mentioned was the most helpful to them, as a parent. The following table shows the most frequently mentioned.

Table 8 – Most helpful service to parent

Service <u>most helpful</u> to you as parent	% Mention
Nursery in a school	24
Midwife	7
Childminder	7
Family member	7
Breast-feeding group	6
GP practice	6
Toddler group	4
Health visitors	4
Pre-school playgroup	3
Further Education	3
Day nursery	1
Homestart	1
Toy Library	1
Don't Know/no response	27

- It would appear that support from the midwife in the earliest stage of parenthood, and, later on, childcare support offered by the school-based nursery, childminder and family member are particularly useful to parents in Retford (North).

5.1.8 Most helpful service to child/children

- Respondents were asked to say which one out of the services they had mentioned was the most helpful to their child or children. The following table shows the most frequently mentioned.

Table 9 – Most helpful service to child

Service <u>most</u> helpful to your child	% Mention
Nursery in a school	36
Pre-school playgroup	10
Health visitors	6
Childminder	4
Day Nursery	4
Toddler group	4
Midwife	3
Family member	3
Speech Therapy	3
Breast-feeding group	1
Further Education	1
GP practice	1
Don't know/no response	25

- Although the nursery in the school once again comes top of the table, the balance of responses is slightly different here, with the pre-school playgroup rated as being more helpful to the child than the childminder and day nursery, and positive role of the health visitor also highlighted.

5.1.9 Help to use services more often

- A list of suggestions that might help parents to use services more often or more easily was shown to respondents. See Showcard 2 (Appendix 2). They were asked which of those listed might help them.
- Responses are given for the group as a whole and then for those respondents aged less than 29 years and 30-39 years, the dominant age groups in the sample.

Table 10 – Help to use services more often

Suggestion

	Total %	Aged < 29 %	Aged 30-39 %
Better public transport	34	63	23
Childcare	34	21	39
Different times of events	28	33	26
Better price	21	25	19
Someone to go with	18	17	19
None	18	4	29

- These results show that while better public transport and childcare were the biggest factors that would help parents to use services more often, the former was much more important to the younger parents, while the older parents placed more emphasis upon childcare.
- Different times of events and a better price were more important to those in the younger age group
- Someone to go with was the least important factor overall, and was given equal weight by both age groups.

5.1.10 Preferences for receiving information

- Shown a list of ways of receiving information, respondents were asked to say which they would prefer.

Table 11– Preferences for receiving information

Suggestion	Total %	Aged < 29 %	Aged 30-39 %
Newsletter	61	58	48
Flyer / information sheet	37	38	39
Word of mouth (e.g. health visitors, nursery staff)	31	25	45
Article in local paper	28	29	35
Word of mouth (family, friends, other parents)	27	29	29
Information session at nursery/clinic/Sure Start	27	38	29

- These results show a strong preference for written information as the best way of finding out about what is available locally.

- At the same time, older parents were more likely than the younger group to welcome verbal information, possibly suggesting that they are more tuned in to a range of information sources, encompassing both formal publicity and word-of-mouth contacts.

5.1.11 Reaction to the proposed Children’s Centre for Retford (North)

- Respondents were asked if they had any comments or concerns about a Children’s Centre coming to Retford (North).
- 42% did not respond to this question but more than a quarter (28%) expressed enthusiasm about the arrival of the Centre, with comments such as “*Good idea*”, “*Brilliant*”, “*Excellent*”, “*Helpful*”.
- At the same time, 21% concerns voiced concerns about parking and traffic congestion.

5.1.12 Three things Retford (North) needs to make it better for families

- When asked what 3 other things Retford (North) needs to make it better for families with young children, respondents came up with a list of suggestions as shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12 – Suggestions to make the area better

Suggestion from respondent	% (N=67)
Playground/Park (better/safer/cleaner)	27
More outdoor play areas/Somewhere to play/More activities	25
Youth club/Activities for older children	10
Indoor/Safe/Soft play area	9
Mother & Baby/Toddler Groups	9
Before and after-school activities/clubs	9
Holiday activities/care for children	7
More/better child care/nurseries	7
Place to meet/group for Mums to meet	6
More/better information	6
More/better facilities for smaller children	6
Swimming pool/leisure facilities	6
Services nearer/more local	4
More support/somewhere for support	3

More/better buses/pushchair-friendly buses	3
More/Better parking	1
Road safety/speed bumps/school crossing patrols	1
Other	16
Don't know/no response	9

- The most frequently suggested ideas focused on outdoor play and leisure activities for all, including older children. These fall outside the Children's Centre remit but are indicative of the concerns of respondents who feel the lack of facilities for older children impacts on their younger children.
- Parents also want more activities and meeting places for those with very young children, plus care and activities for older children at the end of the school day and during the holidays.

5.2 Partners' Questionnaires

- Partners' anonymised responses are shown in full at Appendix 3.

5.2.1 Current problems or gaps in services

- Partners were asked to comment specifically on services for parents and young children in the Retford (North) area, the site of the forthcoming Children's Centre. The issues they raised were:

- A need for wrap-around care, such as after-school care, and, more generally, for affordable childcare.
- Currently a lack of integration of services so that parents are unsure about where to go for help.
- Sometimes a lack of capacity to identify and support parents most in need.
- Linked to this, a need for better local access to specialist services, such as speech and language therapy and child and family therapy, plus locally available eye and hearing tests so that parents do not have to travel to Worksop.
- Poor maintenance and security of outdoor play facilities.
- A need for different kinds of parental support, including parent training, back-to-work advice, help with library and internet access, information on benefits and grants.
-

5.2.2 Likely impact of the Children's Centre

- The partners anticipated that:
 - services would be more co-ordinated and accessible;
 - there would be localised delivery for those most in need;
 - there would be a visible focal point for service;
 - speech and language therapy could be available for children attending school without the parents having to take them;
 - a wider range of toddler groups could be supported.
- One partner expressed scepticism about the difference that could be made to services through the Children's Centre:
"I'm not sure they will (change) in the `core'. Perhaps the money should be spent improving the services we've already got."

5.2.3 Biggest challenge in developing the Children's Centre

- Several practical challenges were raised by the partners, notably how to manage access and parking to minimise the inconvenience to local residents while ensuring that parents can reach the Centre easily.
- The prevention of vandalism to the building was another issue.
- The divided `catchment' of the Centre between the Hallcroft and Carr Hill schools was seen to be a potential difficulty, one person commenting from prior experience:
"We find collecting children from Carr Hill a challenge."

- Another kind of challenge was how to overcome apathy and motivate parents to take advantage of what the Centre offered.

5.2.4 Effectiveness of existing meetings between services

- The partners were asked to identify cross-agency/service meetings already held in the area to discuss local issues. Their comments on their usefulness were also sought, along with information as to whether parents were involved.
- It would appear from their replies that mechanisms to promote partnership working and parental involvement are lacking in the area. 8 of the 9 respondents either did not reply to the question or said that they were unaware of any meetings. A pre-school playgroup supervisor said that local settings met approximately 4 times per year but that no parents were involved. This reference was probably to cluster meetings held by the qualified teacher employed via the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to support early years education practice in the private, voluntary and independent settings within the area, in which case it would not be an appropriate forum for parental involvement.
- The partners' replies on this issue underline the need for the Children's Centre Development Team to give priority within its action plan to establishing such a network.

5.2.5 Top priorities for Retford (North)

- Responses to a question about their top three priorities for the area tended to reflect the partners' hopes and concerns expressed earlier in the questionnaire. Thus they identified needs for:
 - *"affordable, flexible childcare."*
 - *"good liaison with Hallcroft School and Carr Hill"*
 - *"support for parents"*
 - *"acceptance of local community."*
- Their replies also revealed their hopes about the values that should underpin the delivery of services in the area:
 - *"access for those in most need."*
 - *"balance in providing services that don't patronise or make people feel threatened."*
 - *"making sure parents have a choice and do not just choose the Children's Centre because it is subsidised."*
- More specific suggestions about what is needed were:
 - Speech therapy on site
 - Eye/hearing tests
 - Toy library/equipment loan
 - Toddler groups
 - *"To signpost parents to appropriate services when Albion (Family Centre) work is done."*
 - Family support for children in need through individual work and with the drop-in group
 - Parenting programmes, assessments as guided by child protection plan

- The partner who is a childminder expressed concern about the possible erosion of the childminding role and customer base, and the negative consequences of this for young children. Priorities for her were:
 - “Making childminding attractive and sustainable and paying childminders directly from working family tax credit as parents do not see that the money they receive is to help pay for childcare, (not) just an addition to their weekly allowance.”*
 - and
 - “Making sure that children who will benefit most from home-based care are not left in the Children’s Centre because it is an easy option.”*

5.3 The Focus Group

- Of the 11 parents who had confirmed the previous day that they would attend the focus group, six arrived for the session. All were mothers. The ages of their children were as follows:
 - 9 and nearly 5 years
 - 19,17 and 4 years
 - 10 weeks
 - 12, 7 and 4 years
 - 3 years
 - 3 and 6 years
- The first part of the session was devoted to mapping the services for under-fives available in Retford (North). This can be seen at Appendix 6. It should be emphasised that the mapping reflected parents' current knowledge and does not necessarily provide a definitive listing of services.
- This showed that peaks of activity in the area fall on certain days, with fewer known activities on others.
- For example, while Wednesday and Thursday are busy days, with activities in the morning and afternoon, there is no recorded activity on Monday and Friday afternoons, and just one baby clinic weigh-in mentioned on Tuesday afternoons.
- The discussion then moved on to the usefulness and child-friendliness (or otherwise) of local services, and ideas about gaps to be filled and improvements needed, including suggestions about what the new Children's Centre might provide.
- The discussion guide used in the focus group will be found at Appendix 3.
 - This includes areas which reflect the main section of the parents' questionnaire:
 - Knowledge of services in the area
 - Strengths and weaknesses of current services
 - Gaps in current provision
 - Good things anticipated from the arrival of the Children's Centre, and any concerns
 - Improvements needed in the local area

5.3.1 Local services reviewed

- During the mapping exercise, a mother with a pre-school child said that she had not received any information about the choices available for using nursery education grant funding. She had moved her little boy from his pre-school playgroup to a school-based nursery partly because she had believed this was the only means of qualifying for funding. Although he had settled well, she said that it would have been helpful to have known at the time that she had the option of using the funding towards playgroup fees.
- The members of the group were asked to appraise the usefulness of local services for parents. This stimulated both negative and positive comments.

- One mother expressed considerable dissatisfaction at the out-of-hours service offered by local GPs, and referred in particular to a recent emergency when she had requested a home visit for her child:

“You can’t even get a doctor to come out to your house around here. In an emergency I tried to ring a doctor one Sunday evening when my little daughter was really poorly and they wanted me to take her with a fever up to the hospital in Worksop. It was absolutely disgraceful. I’m totally at wits end with our doctors’ services around here. And we do have so many doctors around here, and yet none of them will do after hour calls.”

- Someone else said that she had suffered from post-natal depression with all three of her children but that her doctor had offered no information or help other than anti-depressants.
- The mothers agreed that there was no local source of information about alternative therapies for babies and children, to cope with common conditions such as colic and sleeplessness. One had used a friend’s contacts to track down an osteopath and craniopath for help with her daughter’s sleep problems.
- The group felt that access to sports and leisure facilities for parents was hampered by the lack of crèche facilities at the local Leisure Centre. One mother contrasted the local provision with what was available in Nottingham:

“I was quite into sports when I first had my little boy and I found that I had to go into Nottingham and their sports centres there are fantastic. They’ve all got crèches...In Retford there seem to be so many young mothers walking about in an afternoon. Why can’t we have a crèche in the sports centre?”

- They also felt that the Leisure Centre, which was shortly to close for refurbishment, would be less useful to them when it re-opened since it would be smaller and more focused on local schools than on the public during the day.
- On the positive side, several mothers praised the breast-feeding support they had found locally, even though it had not always been offered spontaneously

“The only service that I’ve found helpful or useful for me- but then again I’ve had to literally go and ask my midwife for it - was the breast-feeding support group. It was just friends and relatives that helped me otherwise with everything else. But that did help me confidence-wise. I just felt that I could go there and have a moan and they’d understand.”

- In one case, breast-feeding support had proved so successful that the mother had needed to seek advice to wean her son off the breast at the age of two-and-a-half.
- Breast-feeding support was felt to be equally necessary for second and subsequent children, although this did not always seem to be recognised by health professionals.
- A new mother said that while her family had been very supportive when her new baby had feeding and sleeping problems, they had tended to encourage her to

switch to bottle feeding. She felt that she might have continued to breast feed for longer if she had been more confident and had had more positive support.

- At the same time, the group recognised that mothers who chose not to breast-feed were equally in need of support and reassurance.
- One mother had been very successfully supported by her health visitor to resolve her son's sleeping problems. Sleep difficulties were reported by several other parents in the group.

5.3.2 Services most helpful to the child

- The mother who had received advice about her son's sleep felt that this had been very beneficial for him too. The structured approach which her health visitor advocated had worked within two nights. She contrasted this successful outcome with the long-term difficulties her older child had experienced in getting to sleep. She thought that her son would have become much more stressed if he had struggled through without sleeping.
- There was general agreement about the valuable role played by of the school-based nursery in assisting their children's social development, with such comments as:
 - "It brings them out of themselves."*
 - "They learn to mix and how to share."*
 - "They look forward to coming to school and meeting their friends."*
- But they also said that their children needed less structured opportunities for play and activity. One mother commented on how much her son had enjoyed playing on the big playing field at Hallcroft Infants, which, in contrast to other local parks, was not dominated by older children to the exclusion of younger ones:
 - "He's been able to go up there and fly a kite or play football. There's nowhere else for them to play football."*

5.3.3 Child-friendliness of local services

- The focus group members thought that the lay-out of facilities was an important aspect of child-friendliness but also recognised that community groups, such as toddler groups and pre-school playgroups, had to make the best of the local facilities available. One mother commented how the positioning of the toilets at one local toddler group was a headache for her friend with a very active little boy who disappeared into them at every opportunity rather than staying in the main play area.
- By contrast, the structure of toddler group sessions was seen as something that could be controlled. The toddler groups at St Saviour's Church attracted praise from one mother for its combination of open play with more structured activities and songs at the end. She felt that some kind of structure was important to make the session satisfying for her child.
- Public amenities in the centre of Retford were not considered child-friendly. It was difficult to find changing facilities and even the toilets that had recently been renovated at the school and nursery in West Street had no bins, so that parents had to take dirty nappies with them and deposit them elsewhere.
- The toilets in town had been equipped with blue lighting in order to discourage drug users from injecting, but this meant that parents could hardly see when

toileting their children. Pushchair-accessible disabled toilets could no longer be used because they now required a special key.

- The mothers reported that there was nowhere in town where they could breast-feed easily. One had been allowed to feed her child in the staff-room at Boots on one occasion but another had received a less helpful response from a fast-food outlet when they had refused her a jug of water to heat her baby's bottle on the grounds that she was not a customer. She pointed out that the attitudes of staff were as important as the facilities provided.
- Toilet facilities were also an issue at the public library since these were no longer generally accessible for parents with young children (although a key could be requested),
- The library was praised for having a pleasant children's area but the mothers pointed out that it was difficult to leave their children there while they browsed in the main section because the exit was positioned in between.
- The mothers described the facilities for children at the local GP surgeries as "very limited." The surgery at Bridgegate was said to be quite helpful; if a baby needed feeding, for example, they would offer to warm up a bottle. At Crown House surgery, however, there was not even a changing room, just one large toilet.
- The Job Centre came in for particular criticism for having made no provision for children:
"The Job Centre's terrible on your own, never mind if you've got a child... There's nothing to keep children interested whatever."
- The mothers complained that most shops in Retford were not pushchair-accessible despite legislation to promote wheelchair access. But two members of the group who worked at Asda reported a very positive company approach to making staff aware of parents needing help.
- People who ignored child priority parking bays contributed to the difficulties of shopping with children.
- The mothers welcomed the buses which have drop-down floors for easy pushchair access but felt that there were too few of them, and that there was insufficient space on the bus for the pushchair, baby and shopping.
- Irregular bus services were another issue.

5.3.4 Gaps in services and ideas for improvements

- The focus group mothers agreed with the questionnaire finding that better parks and playspaces were badly needed in order to improve the quality of life for parents and young children.
- Existing parks were seen to be shabby, neglected and unpleasant.
- Access to open land was felt to be as important as the provision of parks. An open space with a cycle track, for example, would be useful for older children and for families with younger ones.
- The mothers also came up with the idea of a communal allotment to promote self-sufficiency, exercise and healthy eating.

- Facilities for older children in the 10-15 age group were a high priority for these parents. They felt that there was a particular need for a youth club to cater for this group.
- Better toilet facilities in public spaces, shops and surgeries were seen as a priority.
- An upgrading of the local bus service to provide regular, spacious and pushchair-friendly buses was felt to be badly needed.

5.3.5 Ideas and concerns about the children's centre

- Many constructive and imaginative ideas emerged from the parents in the group about how the Children's Centre might help local parents and children. The following were highlighted:
 - baby yoga and baby massage
 - complementary and alternative therapies
 - sleep clinic
 - general advice and guidance about children's behaviour
 - classes on different cultures and religions to compensate for the lack of cultural diversity in the town
 - help in learning how to bath and play with babies – something that did not always come easily to mothers who had not themselves been part of a large family
 - toddler groups for grandparents and grandchildren
 - antenatal classes
 - a local information exchange with somewhere to distribute literature about courses available at College
 - Mums and Dads' meetings (with crèche) for 'me' time and an adult chat
 - a youth club for 10-15 year olds
- At the same time, some concerns were expressed about aspects of the Children's Centre and its impact on the immediate neighbourhood:
 - Parking. This was described as a "*very big issue*" for parents and for local residents.
 - Security of the building and its surroundings to protect children. The mothers were anxious in case the arrival of the Children's Centre would make the environment less safe for children, for example by attracting unsuitable people.
 - At the same time, the mothers recognised that it would be part of the remit of the Children's Centre to offer services and support to parents who may themselves be experiencing difficulties.
 - The impact on the appearance of the school. The mothers feared that the pleasant aspect of the school would be hidden by the new building.
 - Long-term funding. The mothers had heard rumours that after a couple of years the costs of funding the Children's Centre would be switched to the Council Tax.
- All these concerns were talked through in the group with the focus group coordinators, one of whom was a member of the Children's Centre Development Team. Reassurance was offered on all points, along with details

of practical measures proposed for security and parking, and an outline of the ongoing revenue funding arrangements for the Children's Centre direct from central government.

5.3.6 Issues arising from the focus group

- Many of the issues that emerged from the discussion amongst parents in the focus group reflected those found amongst partners, service providers and from the questionnaire.
- However, other issues were only expressed by the small number of parents at the focus group, whose opinions may not necessarily be representative of all parents in Retford (North).

These included:

1. Difficulties experienced by parents in finding out about the funding options in relation to the free entitlement for nursery education for 3-4 year olds.
2. The need for more responsive and efficient out-of-hours care from local GP practices.
3. A desire to find out about and explore complementary therapies for their children
4. The importance of sensitive and timely breast-feeding support for new and second-time mothers.
5. A plea for greater attention to be paid to child-friendliness in doctors' surgeries, clinics, local shops, banks and buses, with better provision for changing and breast-feeding.
6. A need for more and better toilets and changing facilities in public places
7. Recognition that meeting the play and leisure needs of older children is important in its own right but also in maintaining the quality of provision for young children in parks and playgrounds.
8. A need for a more reliable and child-friendly local bus service.
9. Raising awareness of cultural diversity.

6. Key messages for the future

- The interviews with parents, the focus group and input from the partners show a high level of agreement about the needs of parents and young children in Retford (North) for the future.

These include:

- more thought given to making public places and community services accessible, welcoming and safe for families of young children.
- more and better leisure opportunities for children of all ages, including holiday care;
- more flexibility about when parents can use services, including evenings and weekends;
- a more strategic approach to providing information about what is available locally, with a specific aim of ensuring that first-time parents are fully informed.
- a readily identifiable local source of advice and support on a range of child-rearing matters;
- a focal point for parents and young children, with better co-ordination of services
- the development of services in response to the expressed needs of local families.
-
- While the consultation necessarily had its limitations, due to lack of time and resource, the results are still felt to be representative of the community; it was always seen as a first conversation to provide a basis with which to build the future Children's Centre in Retford (North).
- There is the need to assure parents and partners that the Children's Centre is sustainable and that the involvement of all parties is crucial in its success, as well as allowing parents to take ownership of the Children's Centre, to be jointly engaged with professionals in the provision of services for them and their families.
- This consultation and the planned feedback session are the starting points from which services for children under 5 and their families will develop. There is every reason to think from responses that parents will become involved, so that the Children's Centre becomes their service, rather than something delivered to them.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaires – parents and partners

Appendix 2 – Showcards

Appendix 3 – Focus Group discussion guide

Appendix 4 – ‘Other’ comments from parent questionnaires

Appendix 5 – Mapping exercise from focus group & partners

Appendix 6 – Responses from partners

- We're talking to local people about the new Sure Start Children's Centre that's coming along to Retford (North) – which will be a partnership of services for parents and their children under 5 – health, education, child care etc - and finding out what parents think about current services.
- Taking part in this survey means that you'll be included in a prize draw for an arts & craft set for your child - and should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete.
- All replies will be treated in strict confidence and no one will be identifiable. Please help us by answering as many questions as possible

- | | Yes | Not sure | No |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Do you know about Sure Start? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Do you know about the proposed Children's Centre to be developed to Retford (North)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Please can you tell me which local services [including Sure Start] you or your family have ever used [See list of services below - tick or write in the name of any venue or service used] | | | |
| 4. How useful were the services you have mentioned, for you and your family, from 1 - 5, where 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful? [Complete for all mentioned] | | | |
| 5. How child-friendly is the service you've mentioned, on a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is not at all childfriendly and 5 is very childfriendly? [Complete for all mentioned] | | | |
| 6. Of the ones you mentioned, which <u>one</u> service do you think was most helpful. ... to you, as a <u>parent</u> ? | | | |
| 7. and most helpful to your <u>child/children</u> ? | | | |

Use grid on below for recording answers to questions 3 to 7. (Circle

	3. Local services ever used (tick or write in name of venue or service, if known)	4. Usefulness of the service, from 1-5, where 1 = not very useful to 5 = very useful					5. Child Friendliness of service from 1-5, where 1 = not at all child friendly to 5 = very child friendly					6. which <u>one</u> service do you think was most helpful to you as a <u>parent</u>	7. which <u>one</u> service do you think was most helpful to your <u>child</u>
Antenatal sessions	1	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	1
Midwife	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	2	2
Breast-feeding group	3	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	3	3
Children's Library service	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	4	4
Childcare:													
Childminder	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	5	5
After school club	6	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	6
Breakfast club	7	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	7	7

Day nursery	8	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	8	8
Nursery in a school	9	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	9	9
Independent School	10	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	10	10
Pre-school playgroup	11	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	11	11
Toddler group	12	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	12	12
Crèche	13	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	13	13
Family member	14	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	14	14
Friends	15	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	15	15
CIS (Children's Information Service)	16	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	16	16
Dietician/Nutritionist	17	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	17	17
Further Education	18	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	18	18
GP practice	19	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	19	19
Health visitors	20	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	20	20
Home Safety Equipment scheme	21	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	21	21
Home Visits	22	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	22	22
Homestart	23	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	23	23
Job Centres	24	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	24	24
Parenting advice & guidance	25	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	25	25
Speech Therapists	26	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	26	26
Family Centre	27	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	27	27
Toy Library	28	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	28	28
Welfare rights sessions	29	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	29	29
Story Time sessions	30	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	30	30

8. If you thought any of these services were **not useful** or **not very useful**, why was this?
[Interviewer, only ask if circled 1 or 2 in Q4.]

9. If you thought any of these were **not childfriendly** or **not at all childfriendly**, why was this?
[Interviewer, only ask if circled 1 or 2 in Q5.]

10. Please look at this list and tell me what would help you to use any of the services more often?
[Use Showcard 2 & circle any mentioned]

Better public transport	1
-------------------------	---

Childcare	2
Someone to go with	3
Different times of events	4
Better price	5

11. How would you ideally like to receive information about services for you and your child/children? [Use Showcard 3 and circle any mentioned]

Newsletter	1
Flyer/information sheet	2
Word of mouth (eg Health Visitor / nursery staff / GP)	3
Word of mouth (friends / family / other parents)	4
Article in local paper	5
Information session at nursery/clinic/Sure Start	6

12. Can you say what 3 things you think the area needs to make it better for parents with young children?

- i. -----

- ii. -----

- iii. -----

13. And finally, do you have anything else to say about the Sure Start Children's Centre, from what you've heard so far - any concerns or comments?

Just a few questions ABOUT YOU that will help us to **plan for future services**. All replies will be treated in strictest confidence.

14. Are you: Male Female

15. Your age is: Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50 +

16. Number of adults (aged 18+) in the household (Please write in)

17. Number of adults (aged 18+) **working** in the household (Please write in)

18. Are YOU: (tick all that apply)

Working Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working Part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/ Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other relative /friend (write in)	<input type="text"/>

19. Are you and/or your partner expecting a baby? Yes No

20. Number of children in household: None Under 5s 5-16 16+

21. Are you: Single Married/partnered Other

22. Ethnic origin:

White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please write in any other

23. To help us make sure we have talked to parents from all areas, please can you tell me your postcode? We will not be able to identify you from this information.

Your postcode eg DN22 5JQ: -

D	N						
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

Thank you

Contact sheet
(Will be separated from questionnaire)



There will also be the opportunity to join in a discussion group to talk about the Children's Centre, to find out more about what you think. Participants will receive £10 Gift Voucher as a thank you. Would you be interested in that? Date: 20th April 2005 1-3pm
Venue: Retford (North) School

Please tick Yes No Focus Group

If you are interested, you may be contacted nearer the time to confirm this.

I also need to take your name, address and phone number to enter you in the prize draw* for the arts & crafts set. This information will be kept separate from your responses to the survey. **[Complete contact details]**

Please tick Entry into Prize Draw

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Thank you for your help with this survey and the future plans for Retford (North) Children's Centre. Look out for more information and feedback on the survey.

Please return this form to:

Janet Lang
Lang Research Associates
45 Caledon Road
Nottingham NG5 2NF
0115 841 2844

By 19th April.

THANK YOU!

* Terms and conditions

1. Entry to the prize draw is free. Only one entry per person.
2. The draw will take place on 20th April 2005.
3. The winner will be notified by post or telephone.
4. No alternative to the prize stated will be offered.
5. The competition is open to all participants of this survey, excluding employees of Nottinghamshire County Council Early Years & Childcare team and their families.

Children's Centre Consultation – Questions for Key Partners/Service Providers

- 1. Introduction:** The main purpose of this consultation is to gather the **views of partners and service providers** on existing services for parents and young children under 5 in **Retford (North)** and on what you consider to be the **priorities** for the development of the Children's Centre in the area to serve these families.
 - Please be open and honest, and answer all relevant questions; your responses will help with the **planning** of future services.
 - All responses will be treated in confidence, and nothing attributed to any individual. However, if you wish to give your contact details for any follow up questions we may have, or for future research purposes, please complete the box below. Again, none of your responses will be identifiable in the final report.
 - Parents and carers will be completing another questionnaire, which will gather their views on the Children's Centre plans.
- 2. How to complete this questionnaire:** If you prefer to complete this questionnaire by email, please send an email to janet.lang@ntlworld.com requesting a copy. You will then be able to type your responses in the boxes (which will expand) and email back to janet.lang@ntlworld.com. Please complete and return the questionnaire asap.
 - Please also list **the services and activities** with which you are involved on a **separate sheet**, giving your name, job title and organisation, to help us produce an up-to-date map of services in the area, and return with the questionnaire, under separate cover if you prefer.

- Return to **Janet Lang** at:

Lang Research Associates
45 Caledon Road
Nottingham
NG5 2NF

Thank you for your input, which is very welcome.

PTO

If you wish to give your contact details, please do so below:

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please give the type of organisation you work for 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please give your job title & employer (if relevant) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been working in this role? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's your main area of responsibility? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are the current problems, or gaps in current services, for parents and young families in Retford (North)? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what way do you think the advent of the Children's Centre will change the way services are delivered? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is going to be <u>the</u> biggest challenge locally in developing the Children's Centre? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If workers from different settings / services have regular meetings to discuss local issues, how useful are these? Are parents invited to these? [Please indicate how often these are held, if at all] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your top three priorities for developing services or facilities or resources for parents and young children in Retford (North), Retford. OR 	1.
	2.

- What 3 things in your opinion would most improve the area for families with children under 5?

3.

Partners – please could you write down all the services and activities available from your team for children aged 0-5 and their families, living in Retford (North). This will allow us to map provision in the area, identify gaps for the Children's Centre planning to address, and promote those services that do exist. Thank you.

Example

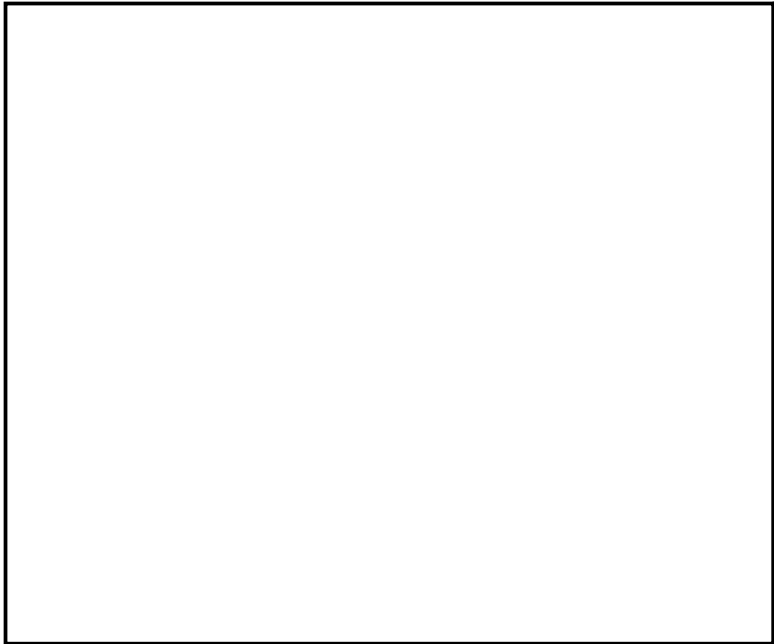
<i>Health Visitor</i>	<i>Healthy eating group</i>	<i>Community centre</i>	<i>Monday 10-11</i>	<i>Sue Smith 01636 717171</i>
-----------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------	-----------------------------------

Team/service	Activity/service	Venue	Times	Contact

Please continue over the page if necessary

Showcard 1 – List of Services

Antenatal sessions	CIS (Children's Information Service)
Breast-feeding group	Dietician/Nutritionist/Food & Diet Advice
Children's Library service	Family Centre
Childcare:	Further Education
Childminder	GP practice
After school club	Health visitors
Breakfast club	Home Safety Equipment Scheme
Day nursery	Home Visits
Nursery in a school	Homestart
Independent School	Job Centres
Pre-school playgroup	Midwife
Toddler group	Parenting advice & guidance
Crèche	Speech Therapists
Family member	Story Time sessions
Friends	Toy Library
	Welfare rights sessions



Nottinghamshire



Early Years
Development
and Childcare
Partnership

Showcard 3

Newsletter

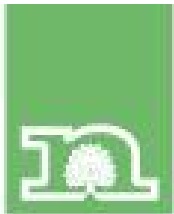
Flyer/information sheet

Word of mouth professional
(eg Health Visitor/nursery staff)

Word of mouth friends and
family

Article in local paper

Information session at
nursery/clinic/Sure Start



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Appendix 3

Discussion Guide Sure Start Children's Centres

Introduction: 5 minutes

- Introductions, say carrying out work on behalf of Sure Start Children's Centre about which will explain more shortly
- All views expressed are confidential – not attributable to any source
- No right or wrong answers – the opportunity for them to have their say

Initial warm up: 15-20 minutes

- Initial warm up to get everyone talking; ask them in turn - name, where they live, number and age of children, which school/playgroup/nursery etc they attend and gather for mapping exercise.
- Whether they work/go to college, anything else of interest relevant to discussion eg how long lived in the area.

Areas to avoid dwelling on

- Individual workers in services, especially not individual weaknesses re improvements to services
- Things beyond the control of Early Years Team eg larger political or social issues

Explanation about Sure Start Children's Centre: 10 minutes

- Diane to lead, explaining the concept and purpose, plans for Retford (North) etc

Main sections of discussion: 60 minutes

- *Mapping of current services, by day, and time of day (20 minutes)*
(need flip chart & paper)
- Highlights from questionnaire (to date): (30 mins)
 - **Service most helpful to you as a parent:**
 - **Service most helpful to your child:**
Which specific things cited as useful & childfriendly in the survey?
 - **Services thought poor or very poor:**
 - **Services thought not child-friendly or not at all child-friendly:**
Which were not useful or child-friendly?
When things aren't childfriendly, why is that?
What would make services more child-friendly?
 - **Good thing about having Children's Centre:**
 - **3 other things needed to make Retford (North) a better place:**
Gaps in current provision
Areas for improvement in the local area
- **Thoughts or concerns about the idea of Children's Centre** (10 mins)

Next Steps: 5 minutes

- Feedback (report and one-page sheet)

- Letters to all who completed the questionnaire
- Stakeholder meeting to which all will be invited, including the plans for Retford (North)
- Any further thoughts – give Diane contact details

Thank you

Appendix 4 – ‘Other’ comments from parent’s questionnaire, not included

Why not useful	Why not child-friendly	Other 3 things the area needs	Any concerns or comments about the Children's Centre
Q8	Q9	Q12	Q13
Only breastfed for six weeks, too hungry	Couldn't take older children - no childcare. Tue 7pm = bedtime, not useful	Better advertisements for playgroups, need to be in paper	No concerns, would be nice to talk to have someone to talk to for advice
Don't see kids. No confidence at all. Emergency appt not dealt with swiftly. Don't see child always - try to do it over phone (GP)	Job Centre, difficult to push chair through door	More places like Wst Street p/g	Something for older children
		Local school should be till 12 years	Concern about take up of grounds, less space for playing
		Access to experts/professionals	Hope the above will come with childrens centre
		More places to leave child for a couple of hours	Will people who live around Carr Hill be able to benefit?
			How do you get from Carr Hill/Tilne Lane to Hallcroft? Without own transport

Appendix 5

Current Services in Retford (from parents)

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
A.M.	Breakfast care, Hallcroft Infants' School				
	Holiday activities at Leisure Centre, New Life Church, St Saviour's Church, West Street, Thrimpton (?) school, Museum				
	Toddler group, Hallcroft Community Centre	Toddler group, Hallcroft Methodist Church	La Leche support group, Retford hospital	Toddler group, Hallcroft Infants' School	Toddler group, West Street
	Floaties, Leisure Centre *	Toddler group, New Life church	Floaties, Leisure Centre	Toddler group, New Life church	
		Floaties, Leisure Centre			
	Ante-natal clinic, Retford hospital (?)				
P.M.	Holiday activities at Leisure Centre, New Life Church, St Saviour's Church, West Street, Thrumpton school, Museum				
	After-school clubs, Claremont and New Life Church				
		Baby clinic weigh-in, Crown House surgery	Toddler group, West Street	Toddler group, The Well	
			Toddler group, St Saviour's Church	Toddler group, West Street	

The parents noted that this activity and others based at the Leisure Centre would shortly be unavailable because of its planned closure and refurbishment. The parents also mentioned the following services and activities but did not know dates and times:

- Baby clinics at surgeries other than the Crown House surgery
- Playgroups at West Street, Carborough(?), Ordsall

Current Services in North Retford (from partners)

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
A.M.	West Street Playgroup Before school care, Claremont Wrap-around care, Claremont Holiday care, Claremont Pre-school, Lound Village Hall, Sutton-cum-Lound				
	Support group for childminders at St Michael's church	West Street Holiday Club (holiday periods only)	Parent/toddler group at Hallcroft Infants School	West Street Holiday Club (holiday periods only)	West Street Parent and Toddler Group
	West Street Parent and Toddler Group		Toddler group, Lound Village Hall		
PM	After-school care, Claremont Wrap-around care, Claremont Holiday care, Claremont				
			Parent/toddler group at Hallcroft Infants School	Drop-in facility, West Street Playgroup	
			West Street Parent and Toddler Group	First Link Group at West Street Playgroup/Albion Family Centre	

In addition to the regular activities described in the table, the following activities were identified:

- A range of sessions for parents at Hallcroft Infants School:
 - Parenting (7 week session)
 - Literacy (6 week session)
 - Numeracy (6 week session)
- Occasional Pre-school Learning Alliance Courses at the West Street Groups venue

- Branch committee meetings of the Bassetlaw Pre-school Learning Alliance plus bi-monthly open evenings for all pre-schools in Bassetlaw at the West Street Groups venue.

It was also noted that

- the Albion Family Centre provides parent outreach programmes and assessment as of need.
- West Street Group offers a contact venue for Social Services at tea-times during the week and on Saturdays

Appendix 6

Q1. What do you think are the current problems, or gaps in current services, for parents and young families in Retford?

1. Wrap-around care, e.g. after school.
2. Health/hearing/sight tests. Drop-in groups, parent training, back-to-work advice, library, internet access.
3. Capacity to deliver the requirements of those in most need e.g area around Holmes Road etc.
4. Speech and language. Child and family therapy. Parenting support. Other health links. Support with information on benefits, grants etc.
5. Not answered
6. Affordable childcare in all areas. Outdoor play facilities (poor maintenance and security) all areas. Feed-back re. health visitors is poor – can something be done to improve this service?
7. Lack of integration, families accessing services from providers and being unsure where to go for help.
8. Eye/hearing tests locally, rather than parents travelling to Worksop
9. Not answered

Q2. In what way do you think the advent of the Children's Centre will change the way services are delivered in Retford?

1. Not answered
2. Accessibility for parents with young children
3. Localised delivery for those in most need
4. Hopefully more co-ordinated and local
5. More co-ordinated children's services. Better links.
6. I'm not sure they will in the 'core'. Perhaps the money should be spent improving services we have already got.
7. It will bring access to services to one place.
8. Speech therapy-without parent needing to take them. Local toddler/parent group for younger children than provided by the school.
9. Not answered.

Q3. What do you think is going to be the biggest challenge locally in developing the Children's Centre in Retford?

1. Not answered
2. The position- link between the two areas 'across river.' We find collecting children from Carr Hill a challenge.
3. Ensuring those who are in need of provision have access to it. Ensuring that those who live locally are not inconvenienced and that those in need have good access, otherwise they will not come.
4. Finding the site to put the building on/parking/traffic
5. The site
6. Providing what parents really want. Motivating young parents to attend.
7. Making sure that it is not vandalised.
8. Parking. Apathy – parents will need encouragement to attend.
9. Not answered

Q4. If workers from different settings / services have regular meetings to discuss local issues, how useful are these? Are parents invited to these? [Please indicate how often these are held, if at all]

1. Local settings meet approximately 4 times per year, staff only
2. Not held, other than meeting with staff at Hallcroft on several occasions
3. Not answered
4. Not answered
5. We don't have them
6. Not aware- why are we not aware?
7. I'm not aware of meetings if they exist.
8. Not answered
9. Not answered.

Q5. What are your top three priorities for developing services or facilities or resources for parents and young children in Retford?

Priority 1.

1. Affordable, flexible childcare
2. Good liaison with Hallcroft School and Carr Hill
3. Access for those in most need
4. Regular parenting sessions
5. Support for parents
6. Consultation
7. As a childminder, making sure that parents have a choice and do not just choose the children's centre because it is subsidised.
8. Eye/hearing tests
9. Family support for children in need through individual work and with the drop-in group.

Priority 2.

1. Not answered
2. Easy access for parents to the site and our staff (from north road if possible)
3. Acceptance of local community
4. Speech therapy on site
5. Co-ordinator with knowledge of local services
6. Involvement
7. Making sure that children who will benefit most from home-based care are not left in the Children's Centre because it is an easy option.
8. Toddler groups
9. Partnership/co-working. Parenting programmes, assessments as guided by child protection plan.

Priority 3.

1. Not answered
2. No duplication of our services
3. Transport and communications
4. Toy library/equipment loan
5. Good communication about services
6. Balance in providing services that don't patronise or make people feel threatened.
7. Making childminding attractive and sustainable and paying childminders directly from working family tax credit as parents do not see that the money they receive is to help pay for childcare, just an addition to their weekly allowance.
8. Speech therapy
9. To signpost parents to appropriate services when Albion work is complete.