

**SureStart**



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

Nottinghamshire County **NHS**  
Teaching Primary Care Trust

# Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West Children's Centres Community Consultation – Main Report

Written for: Sure Start Children's Centre Team  
Nottinghamshire County Council

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December 2007

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## Main Report

### 1. Background to the Research

- In line with the government's initiative to introduce Children's Centres into communities which fall within the top 20% and 30% of disadvantaged wards nationally, Nottinghamshire was given the go-ahead for 21 centres to be completed by March 2006, with 3 more to be started in Round One, but completed in Round Two by 2007. A further 25 centres have followed in Round Two, and will be completed by March 2008.
- 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. Partnership with local parents and their early involvement in planning of Children's Centres is an essential part of the ethos of the Children's Centres programme.
- 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, library, health centre, community 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 areas will have childcare for 50 weeks a year, 8am – 6pm offering care integrated with education.
- Children's Centres are built on the successful practice of Sure Start Local Programmes, which have now all been integrated into the Children's Centres programme.
- 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 planning, delivery, evaluation, 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 a wider age-range and incorporating, for example, after school care, holiday clubs etc in partnership with the Extending Services in and around schools programme.
- The interviews and the focus group were conducted in an inclusive manner, 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.

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- Two new children centre areas were identified for Hucknall. After early consultation with partner agencies in 2006, and having regard to numbers of children, the areas were grouped accordingly as Hucknall West Ward as one centre area and joined Hucknall Central and North as the other area. Many of the partner agencies are the same for the Hucknall area so one consultation process was carried out with a distinction being made when consulting with parents from both areas.

## **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 childcare, 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; two focus groups with parents recruited via the questionnaire, one in Hucknall North and Central and one in Hucknall West; and a written self-completion 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

- This initial phase of the consultation consisted of interviews with parents. It was planned to include:
  - *Parents/carers with children aged under 8 years at schools in the area*
  - *Parent/carers who are users of local toddler groups, pre-school playgroups and other sessions for parents and young children*
  - *Parents/carers living locally*
  -
- The majority of interviews were conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Some interviews also took place on 8<sup>th</sup> October at a toddler group run at Annie Holgate School. Workers from Under One Roof, a community organisation in the centre of Hucknall, carried out a small number of interviews with users of the Homestart service during the week, and the leader of the Hucknall Pre-school Playgroup helped with interviewing parents.
- The interviewing venues were:
  - Beardall Street Nursery and School
  - Annie Holgate School and Nursery
  - Annie Holgate Toddler Group
  - Leen Mills School and Early Years Unit
  - Leen Mills Pre-School Playgroup
  - Edgewood Nursery and School
  - Hucknall National School
  - Holy Cross Roman Catholic School
  - Central Methodist Toddler Group
  - Hucknall Mother and Toddler Group
  - Hucknall Pre-school Playgroup
  - Bibs (breastfeeding group), Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre
  - Baby Business (health visitor session), Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre
  - School nurse drop-in session, Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre
  - As we had previously consulted families at Butler's Hill Infant and Nursery we did not use this again as an interview venue.
- The interviews were carried out by the researchers, a team of freelance interviewers, local councillors, members of the Children's Centre Development Team, staff from Nottinghamshire County Council and workers from the Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre.

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- The questionnaire included an incentive prize draw for a £10 Argos voucher, and an invitation to take part in the planned focus groups. Contact details were taken where given, but this sheet was kept separate from the completed questionnaire.
- Care was taken at these sessions to ensure families who lived only in Hucknall North, Central and West were consulted.

### **3.2. Partners' Questionnaire**

- Partners, key stakeholders and service providers were informed about the planned consultation in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West, at a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at the Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre, Hucknall. Due to the urban nature of the area and the overlap of provision and use of services across the different wards of Hucknall, this large scale consultation included all the Hucknall wards apart from Hucknall East which had been covered by a stand alone consultation in Round One, prior to the completion of Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre. The partners' questionnaire, consisting of open-ended questions, was used as a discussion guide for the meeting and those present were given copies to complete independently. Several did so at the end of the meeting, but those who took copies away with them were encouraged to return them by the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> October.
- Each person at the meeting was also asked to complete a mapping exercise, giving details of the services of which they were aware in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West, 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 and provide more information about interviewing locations.
- Other service providers, such as registered childminders, within a 5-mile radius of Hucknall North, Central and West 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; all but three respondents completed this section.

### **3.3 Focus Groups**

- Due to the large number of families and the distances between different parts of Hucknall, two focus groups for parents and carers were held. Participants were recruited from the indication in the tick-box on the contact details sheet of the parents' questionnaire showing their agreement to participate. A good response to this was received with 81 offering to take part.
- Parents were contacted at random from the resulting list. 12 agreed to come along to a morning session at Under One Roof in the centre of Hucknall on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007 between 9.30 and 11 am. 13 agreed to attend the afternoon session held on the same day at the Seymour Road Baptist Church in the West of Hucknall between 1.30 and 3.00pm. A free crèche was arranged at both venues for those parents who wished to use it. The parents were also offered a £10 Argos voucher as a thank you for taking part in the focus group.
- A letter of information, venue and time details were sent to these parents the next day.
- Two days before the group was due to take place, each respondent was telephoned as a reminder to attend.
- In the event, 10 of the 12 who had confirmed their attendance turned up to the morning focus group session but one had to leave because of difficulties with the crèche arrangements. Similarly, 10 of the 13 who had previously confirmed their

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attendance arrived for the afternoon focus group, and all were able to stay and participate.

- 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.

## 4. Observations on the Samples

### 4.1 Parents' Questionnaire

- 213 questionnaires were completed with parents/carers at the various interviewing points, which was above the minimum target of 200.
- Sure Start data shows that there are 1193 under 5s living in this area. The completed interviews account for parents/carers of 249 under 5s living or using services in the area. This corresponds to 21% of the number of under 5s in the area.
- A good spread of respondents was therefore achieved across the venues available in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West, so the results can be seen as being broadly representative of the views of most parents in the area. However, some questions were answered by only a small number of respondents, so care must be taken when comparing percentages.
- The overwhelming majority (199 or 93%) were female.
- The majority (48%) were aged between 30 and 39 years, with 39% being under 29. 25 (12%) were over 40, including 2(1%) respondents who were over 50 and grandparents.
- Just over half (57%) of respondents had one child under 5 in the household. 23% had two under fives but only nine people had three or more children of this age. 15% of respondents were reported as having no children under 5 in the household.
- A third (33%) of respondents had one child aged 5-16 years in their household; 16% had two; and 5% had three or more. 45% were reported as having no children in this age group.
- Children aged 16+ were found in only 4 families.
- Between them, respondents had 439 children; the number of families with 1 child was 64, the number with 2 children was 87, and 40 families had 3 children. Thirteen families had 4 children, four had 5 and one had 9. 3 respondents said they had no children living with them, and 1 did not respond to the question.
- Given that 213 interviews were completed, this means the average (mean) number of children of respondents with children interviewed was 2.1
- The total number of children aged under 5 in families interviewed was 249, the number of 5-16s was 183, while the number aged 16+ was 7.
- 10 respondents reported that they were expecting a baby at that time.
- While only 16% of respondents were working full-time, many more (37%) worked part-time, and only 4% described themselves as unemployed. In addition, 61% described themselves as full-time parents/carers.
- 79% of respondents were either married or partnered, while 19% were single.
- Most households (75%) had 2 adults aged over 18 living together in the household, while 18% of respondents lived in households of only one adult. 4% reported having 3 or more adults in the household. The average was 1.9 people in the household aged 18+.
- The ethnic composition of the respondents was 99% White; 3 did not disclose their ethnic background.
- All but 5 of the respondents' postcodes fell into NG15; the remaining ones were in NG7, NG6, NG16, NG17 and DE55.
- 35% of respondents described themselves as living in Hucknall Central, 15% in Hucknall North and 33% in Hucknall West. 5% said that they lived in a

surrounding town or village, while the remainder either said they lived elsewhere or did not respond to this question.

- The respondents were distributed between medical practices in Hucknall as follows: 37% at Torkard Hill; 20% at Byron; 20% at Oakenhall; 13% at Portland; and 5% at the OM surgery.
- When asked which nursery/primary schools their children attended, 18% of respondents said they had children at Beardall Street Nursery and School; 15% at Edgewood Nursery and School; 14% at Annie Holgate School and Nursery; 10% at Hucknall National School; 6% at Leen Mills Early Years Unit and School; 4% at Holy Cross Roman Catholic School; and 2% at Hillside Primary School.

#### **4.2 Partners' Questionnaire**

- 14 completed questionnaires were received from service providers in the Hucknall area; all but three gave contact details.
- As Table 1 below shows, over half the partners worked in either health services (e.g. health visiting, general practice) or the county council. The remainder represented a diverse range of organisations.

**Table 1 – Partners' settings**

Discipline	No of responses
Health services	5
County council	3
Community education	2
Voluntary sector	1
Government department	1
Children and family services	1
Children's Information Service	1

- The roles performed by service providers are shown in Table 2. (One respondent did not give this information.)

**Table 2 – Partners' roles**

Health Visitor (4)
Head Teacher (2)
Councillor (2)
General Practitioner
Information Officer
Out-of-school Development Worker
Pre-school Playgroup Supervisor
Homestart Organiser
Lone parent/personal employment adviser

- All the respondents said how long they had been performing their current role. In one case it was only 5 months; in another, it was 22 years. The experience of the remaining 11 respondents amounted to 98.5 years, with an average of 7.

## 4.3 Focus Groups

### 4.3.1 Focus Group 1 North and Central Wards (morning session)

9 of the 12 recruited parents, all of whom were mothers, attended this focus group. Details of their children and their circumstances were as follows:

- Between them, the total number of children was 21, 11 of whom were aged 5 or under and approximately 7 aged between 6 and 11 years, while the remaining 3 were over 12 years of age.
- One mother had five children, three mothers had three children, two had two children and the remaining three had one child.
- This gives an average of 2.3 children each, somewhat higher than the reported average of 2.1 seen in the total number of completed questionnaire interviews.
- None was expecting a baby.
- Four of the parents were themselves involved in early years provision in Hucknall. One was a registered childminder; another worked at a playgroup and after-school club; a third ran a toddler group; and the fourth was the Chair of a playgroup.
- Of the remainder, two were full-time mothers, two worked part-time and one was currently on maternity leave but planned to return shortly to full-time work.

### 4.3.2 Focus Group 2 West Ward (afternoon session)

10 of the 13 recruited parents, all of whom were mothers, attended this focus group. Details of their children and their circumstances were as follows:

- Between them, the total number of children was 20, 12 of whom were aged 5 and under and 7 aged between 6 and 11 years, and one mother had a child over 12 years.
- One mother had four children, seven mothers had two children and two had one child.
- This gives an average of 2.0 children each, somewhat lower than the reported average of 2.1 seen in the total number of completed questionnaire interviews.
- One mother was expecting a baby.
- Four of the parents were currently working part-time.

## 5. Main Findings

### 5.1 Parents' Questionnaire

- 213 questionnaires were completed, which was in excess of the minimum target of 200, and represents 21% of under 5s in the area. Moreover, a good spread of respondents was achieved across the venues available in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West on the two main interviewing days. Nonetheless, some questions were answered by only a small number of respondents, so care must be taken when comparing percentages.
- The majority (80%) of respondents said that they knew about Sure Start.
- 14% did not know, while 6% were not sure.
- A majority (77%) said that they did not know or were not sure that they knew about the proposed Children's Centres for Hucknall West and Hucknall North and Central. Only about a quarter (23%) said that they did know about the proposals.

#### 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=213	% ever used Service	% Sure-Start-aware respondents using service
GP practice	193	91	92
Midwife	177	83	85
Health visitors	172	81	83
Children's Library Service	137	64	64
Toddler Group	122	57	61
Antenatal sessions	110	52	55
Family member	104	49	52
Nursery in a school	91	43	43
Pre-school playgroup	80	38	34
Friends	71	33	35
Job Centre	39	18	19
Day Nursery	36	17	18
Home Visits	32	15	16
Story Time Sessions	29	14	15
Crèche	29	14	15
Toy Library	24	11	11
Speech therapy	23	11	9

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Further Education	20	9	10
Breastfeeding group	19	9	9
Registered Childminder	18	8	10
After School Club	17	8	9
Family Centre	17	8	10
Home Safety Equipment	15	7	9
Dietician/nutritionist	14	7	7
Children's Information Service	13	6	8
Independent School	12	6	5
Parenting Advice & guidance	10	5	5
Breakfast Club	9	4	5
Homestart	7	3	4
Welfare Rights sessions	2	1	1

Shaded areas represent a percentage higher than the total for all users.

- This shows that the GP practice, and the midwifery and health visiting services were the most frequently used services at 91%, 83% and 81% respectively of all respondents.
- Among those services focused on young children, the library service and toddler groups were the most widely used, ahead of pre-school playgroups, day nurseries or registered childminders.
- For the majority of services, levels of use were higher among respondents who were aware of Sure Start but in several cases only by a small margin.

### 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 Homestart and the independent school score 100%, Very Useful, these were used by only seven and twelve people respectively.

**Table 4 – Usefulness of services ever used**

Service	Numbers using service N=213	Very useful %	Quite useful %	Not useful / not at all useful %	Average score*
GP practice	193	61	28	2	4.5
Midwife	177	74	13	4	4.6
Health visitors	172	58	18	9	4.2
Children's Library Service	137	64	24	2	4.5

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Toddler Group	122	75	18	1	4.7
Antenatal sessions	110	56	24	7	4.3
Family member	104	92	5	0	4.9
Nursery in a school	91	89	7	0	4.9
Pre-school playgroup	80	88	8	0	4.8
Friends	71	92	6	1	4.9
Job Centre	39	13	28	34	3.1
Day Nursery	36	64	17	3	4.5
Home Visits	32	56	25	3	4.4
Story Time Sessions	29	52	38	0	4.5
Crèche	29	69	14	10	4.4
Toy Library	24	63	29	0	4.5
Speech therapy	23	61	30	4	4.4
Further Education	20	65	25	0	4.5
Breastfeeding group	19	63	21	5	4.4
Registered Childminder	18	94	0	6	4.8
After School Club	17	59	6	12	4.1
Family Centre	17	59	24	0	4.5
Home Safety Equipment	15	73	13	0	4.6
Dietician/nutritionist	14	36	36	7	3.9
Children's Information Service	13	31	23	8	3.8
Independent School	12	100	0	0	5.0
Parenting Advice & guidance	10	60	20	0	4.4
Breakfast Club	9	67	22	11	4.3
Homestart	7	100	0	0	5.0
Welfare Rights sessions	2	50	0	0	4.0

\* 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 a majority achieving a score between '4' and '5'. The lowest scores, indicating a rating of between neutral and quite useful, were given to the Job Centre, the Children's Information Service and the dietician/nutritionist, although it should be borne in mind that in the case of the latter two only 13 and 14 respectively had direct experience of the service.

### 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.
- Of the 47 people who said that they had experienced a service that was not useful, 41 gave at least one reason.
- Where responses were recorded, 30 (52%) were critical of their local health visitor, midwifery, antenatal and GP services, as shown in Table 5. Other, more detailed reasons for dissatisfaction with services are given in Appendix 5.

**Table 5 – Services identified as not being useful**

Service	N = 58 responses	% of total responses
Health visitors poor/unreliable	10	17
Problems with midwife	9	16
Antenatal sessions poor	7	12
GP practice not very helpful/good	4	7
Other services and/or reasons	22	38
No reason given	6	10
Total	58	100

*Multiple responses given*

### 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 6.
- 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 6 – Child-friendliness of services ever used**

Service	Numbers using service N=213	Very child-friendly %	Quite child-friendly %	Not child-friendly / not at all child-friendly %	Average score*
GP practice	193	41	30	9	4.0
Midwife	177	63	16	3	4.4
Health visitors	172	59	20	5	4.3
Children's Library Service	137	69	21	1	4.6
Toddler Group	122	87	10	0	4.9
Antenatal sessions	110	32	13	17	3.6
Family member	104	91	2	1	4.9
Nursery in a school	91	89	7	0	4.9
Pre-school playgroup	80	93	6	0	4.9
Friends	71	90	4	1	4.9
Job Centre	39	8	10	52	2.4
Day Nursery	36	81	11	6	4.7
Home Visits	32	66	25	0	4.7
Story Time Sessions	29	79	7	0	4.8
Crèche	29	79	7	7	4.6
Toy Library	24	71	29	0	4.7
Speech therapy	23	70	13	4	4.6

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Further Education	20	20	15	15	3.4
Breastfeeding group	19	84	5	0	4.7
Registered Childminder	18	83	6	0	4.7
After School Club	17	76	12	12	4.5
Family Centre	17	71	12	0	4.6
Home Safety Equipment	15	60	7	0	4.6
Dietician/nutritionist	14	57	29	7	4.3
Children's Information Service	13	23	8	15	3.5
Independent School	12	92	8	0	4.9
Parenting Advice & guidance	10	70	20	0	4.8
Breakfast Club	9	67	22	11	4.4
Homestart	7	86	0	0	5.0
Welfare Rights sessions	2	0	0	100	2.0

\* 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

- The range of scores for child-friendliness is greater over the range of services than those for usefulness, indicating that services are considered less consistently child-friendly than they are useful. The welfare rights sessions and the Job Centre, followed by further education, the Children's Information service and antenatal sessions appear at the lower end of the range of scores, 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 some of these cases.

### 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.
- Of the 57 people who said that they had experienced a service that was not child-friendly, 48 gave at least one reason. These responses are presented in Table 7.
- The lack of a child-friendly environment with a play area and toys to keep children occupied emerges as the leading factor. Other, more detailed reasons for dissatisfaction with services are given in Appendix 5.

**Table 7 – Reasons for being not child-friendly or not at all child-friendly**

Service	N = 69 responses	% of total responses
Not appropriate/not suitable for children	19	27
No child-friendly play area or toys	18	26
Not helpful/no interest in or patience with child	8	12
No facilities for younger children, e.g. changing facilities	4	6
No facilities for older children e.g. toys	3	4
Difficult to talk/need for privacy	2	3
Other reasons	6	9

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No reason given	9	13
Total	69	100

*Multiple responses given*

### 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 8 – Comparison of parent and child average (mean) scores**

Service	Average score <sup>1</sup> Usefulness	Average score <sup>2</sup> Child-friendliness	Difference <sup>3</sup>
Welfare Rights sessions	4.0	2.0	2.0
Further Education	4.5	3.4	1.1
Antenatal sessions	4.3	3.6	0.7
Job Centre	3.1	2.4	0.7
GP practice	4.5	4.0	0.5
Children's Information Service	3.8	3.5	0.3
Midwife	4.6	4.4	0.2
Independent School	5.0	4.9	0.1
Registered Childminder	4.8	4.7	0.1
Family member	4.9	4.9	0.0
Nursery in a school	4.9	4.9	0.0
Home Safety Equipment	4.6	4.6	0.0
Friends	4.9	4.9	0.0
Homestart	5.0	5.0	0.0
Health visitors	4.2	4.3	-0.1
Pre-school playgroup	4.8	4.9	-0.1
Children's Library Service	4.5	4.6	-0.1
Family Centre	4.5	4.6	-0.1
Breakfast Club	4.3	4.4	-0.1
Toddler Group	4.7	4.9	-0.2
Crèche	4.4	4.6	-0.2
Toy Library	4.5	4.7	-0.2
Speech therapy	4.4	4.6	-0.2
Day Nursery	4.5	4.7	-0.2
Home Visits	4.4	4.7	-0.3
Story Time Sessions	4.5	4.8	-0.3
Breastfeeding group	4.4	4.7	-0.3
After School Club	4.1	4.5	-0.4
Dietician/nutritionist	3.9	4.3	-0.4
Parenting Advice & guidance	4.4	4.8	-0.4

<sup>1</sup>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

<sup>2</sup>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

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<sup>3</sup> The larger the figure, the larger the difference in the perception of the usefulness and child-friendliness of the service. A score of 0 means that the service is seen as equally child-friendly and useful

- 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 and the midwife are viewed as slightly more useful than they are child-friendly, while the health visitors are viewed as marginally more child-friendly than useful. The differences in scores are quite small across the 30 services listed, with just over half (16) being rated more child-friendly than useful, 9 being more useful than child-friendly and 5 being rated equally on both measures.
- The weighting towards usefulness is greatest for the Welfare Rights and antenatal sessions, Further Education, the Job Centre and the GP, while the weighting towards child-friendliness is greatest for the After School Club, the dietician/nutritionist and Parenting Advice and Guidance, although once again quite small numbers apply in these categories.

### 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 by the group as a whole and by location.

**Table 9 – Most helpful service to parent**

Service <u>most</u> helpful to you as parent	All areas % Mention	Hucknall North and Central % Mention	Hucknall West % Mention
Health visitors	15	18	8
Family member	14	17	13
Toddler Group	14	12	15
Midwife	8	8	13
Nursery in a school	8	4	15
Pre-school playgroup	8	13	3
GP practice	8	5	13
Day Nursery	3	3	3
Friends	3	2	4
Homestart	2	2	3
Registered Childminder	2	3	1
Antenatal sessions	2	2	1
Children's Library Service	2	0	3
Independent School	2	4	0
Breast Feeding Group	2	2	0
Crèche	1	1	1
Home Visits	1	1	1
Speech therapists	1	2	0
Family Centre	1	0	1
Breakfast Club	0	1	0

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Parenting advice and guidance	0	1	0
Dietician/nutritionist	0	1	0
Toy Library	0	0	1
Welfare Rights sessions	0	0	0
Story Time sessions	0	0	0
Don't know/No response	1	2	0

- Looking at the group as a whole, it would appear that support from health visitors and toddler groups, combined with support from within the family, are particularly important to parents.
- However, there are some indications of differences in priorities between parents in Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West. For example, parents in Hucknall North and Central rate the importance of health visitors more highly, while parents in Hucknall West are more likely to nominate the midwife as having been particularly helpful. Also, more parents in Hucknall North and Central mention pre-school playgroups as a key service; while those in Hucknall West are more likely to mention nursery in a school. GP practices are given a higher ranking by parents in Hucknall West, a finding which accords with the evidence from the focus groups (below).

### 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. Table 10 shows the most frequently mentioned by the group as a whole and by location.

**Table 10 – Most helpful service to child**

Service <u>most</u> helpful to your child	All areas % Mention	Hucknall North and Central % Mention	Hucknall West % Mention
Toddler Group	19	21	18
Nursery in a school	17	15	21
Pre-school playgroup	15	21	8
Family Member	11	11	11
GP practice	7	3	10
Health Visitors	6	3	10
Day Nursery	3	4	1
Children's Library Service	3	3	4
Homestart	3	2	4
Speech Therapy	2	2	4
Independent school	2	4	0
Crèche	2	2	1
Breast Feeding Group	2	3	0
Midwife	1	3	0
Friends	1	0	3
Registered Childminder	1	1	0
Family Centre	1	1	1

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Children's Library Service	0	3	4
Story time sessions	0	1	0
Home Visits	0	1	0
Dietician/nutritionist	0	1	0
After School club	0	0	1
Toy Library	0	0	1
Don't know/No response	1	2	0

- Looking at the responses of the group as a whole, pre-school provision (toddler group, nursery in a school and pre-school playgroup) are shown to be particularly helpful to children, rated above either medical services or family support.
- There are, however, some interesting differences between the areas. For example, parents in Hucknall North and Central are more likely than those in Hucknall West to identify pre-school playgroups as a key source of support for their child, possibly reflecting the uneven distribution of this provision across the two areas. The higher ranking of nursery in a school in Hucknall West may similarly reflect the greater availability of this provision (relative to pre-school playgroups) in this area.
- Once again, health visitors and GP practices are ranked more highly in Hucknall West than in Hucknall North and Central.

### 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.
- In Table 11, 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 11 – Help to use services more often**

Suggestion	Number	Total All Areas %	Aged < 29 %	Aged 30-39 %
More local venues	61	29	29	26
Different times of events	56	26	28	24
Childcare	39	18	24	14
Better public transport	38	18	18	18
Someone to go with	34	16	21	15
Better price	26	12	12	14
None	65	31	31	31

*Multiple choices means totals add up to more than 100%*

- These results show that more local venues are the biggest factor that would help parents to use services more often. Different times of events are almost equally important.
- Someone to go with and available childcare are particularly important to parents in the younger age group.
- Better price is marginally more important for parents in the older age group.

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The responses broken down by area are shown in Table 11a below.

**Table 11a – Help to use services more often, by area**

Suggestion	Number	Total All areas %	Hucknall North and Central %	Hucknall West %
More local venues	61	29	31	30
Different times of events	56	26	24	25
Childcare	39	18	20	14
Better public transport	38	18	9	30
Someone to go with	34	16	14	17
Better price	26	12	11	11
None	65	31	34	25

*Multiple choices means totals add up to more than 100%*

- While the weighting given to most measures is similar from area to area, better public transport emerges as a considerably more important issue in Hucknall West. This resonates strongly with one of the themes discussed in the Hucknall West focus group (below).

### 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 12 – Preferences for receiving information**

Suggestion	Number	Total %	Aged < 29 %	Aged 30-39 %
Newsletter	126	59	64	56
Flyer/information sheet	100	47	54	41
Word of mouth (family, friends, other parents)	71	33	40	29
Article in local paper	70	33	31	34
Information session at nursery/clinic/Sure Start	65	31	35	27
Via email/website	64	30	26	36
Word of mouth (e.g. health visitors, nursery staff)	61	29	29	27

*Multiple choices means totals add up to more than 100%*

- These results show a strong preference for written information as the best way of finding out about what is available locally. This is particularly evident among the younger parents, who also favour flyers and information sheets.
- Younger parents have a stronger preference for receiving word of mouth information from within their local family and social networks and from local information sessions, while older parents are likely to rely on the local paper or email/websites.

- When the responses are broken down by area, they show the following distribution:

**Table 12a – Preferences for receiving information**

Suggestion	Number	Total All areas %	Hucknall North and Central %	Hucknall West %
Newsletter	126	59	58	58
Flyer/information sheet	100	47	52	45
Word of mouth (family, friends, other parents)	71	33	32	34
Article in local paper	70	33	35	32
Information session at nursery/clinic/Sure Start	65	31	25	38
Via email/website	64	30	24	35
Word of mouth (e.g. health visitors, nursery staff)	61	29	24	31

*Multiple choices means totals add up to more than 100%*

- This suggests that while parents from both areas are equally likely to nominate a newsletter as their preferred channel for receiving information, those in Hucknall North and Central are more likely to choose a flyer/information sheet and an article in the local paper, while those in Hucknall West are more inclined to receive information from local information sessions, word of mouth within their own social networks and via email/website.

#### **5.1.11 Reaction to the proposed Children’s Centres in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West**

- Respondents were asked if they had any comments or concerns about the development of Children’s Centres in the Hucknall area.
- 55% did not respond to this question but 20% who did had positive expectations of the Centres. Eight respondents highlighted a particular need for more information and more publicity about the plans for their development.
- There were no marked differences in the responses from the two areas.

#### **5.1.12 Three things Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West need to make them better for families**

- When asked what three other things the Hucknall area covered in this report needed to make it better for families with young children, respondents came up with a list of suggestions as shown in Table 13 overleaf.

**Table 13 – Suggestions to make the area better**

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Suggestion from respondent	All areas % (N=213)	Hucknall North and Central % (N= 107)	Hucknall West % (N= 71)
Playground/park (better/safer/cleaner)	30	26	38
Indoor/safe/soft play area	18	21	11
More/cheap/affordable activities/facilities	14	12	18
Outdoor, more/better play areas/somewhere to play/more activities	11	11	11
Public toilets/baby-changing facilities	10	12	8
Mother & Baby/Toddler Groups/Playgroups/toddler activities	8	7	6
More/better information/communication	8	9	6
More childcare/nurseries/crèches	7	9	4
Holiday activities/care for children	6	4	11
More/better facilities for smaller children	5	6	3
More/better buses/better transport	5	4	8
Before and after-school activities/clubs	5	6	6
Road safety/speed bumps/school crossing patrols	4	3	3
Swimming pool/leisure and sports facilities	3	3	4
Breast feeding area	2	4	0
More/better parking	2	1	4
More support/somewhere for support and advice	1	3	0
Youth club/activities for older children/teenagers	1	0	1
Days out/trips/organised outings	1	2	0
Other	19	21	20
Don't know/no response	12	10	11

*Multiple choices means totals add up to more than 100%*

- The most frequently suggested ideas focused on outdoor/indoor play and a range of sports and leisure activities. There is a consensus about this among parents from both the areas featured in the study, but with parents from Hucknall West relatively more concerned about the provision of better and cleaner playgrounds and parks, and parents from Hucknall North and Central more likely to emphasise the importance of indoor soft-play areas.
- Parents also want more public toilet and baby-changing facilities for parents with young children.
- More childcare in nurseries and crèches is also a concern for parents in the Hucknall areas covered in this report, reflecting a perceived shortage of local provision. Parents in Hucknall West have indicated a particular need for holiday activities and clubs for children in their area, a finding that also emerges from the focus group (see below).

## 5.2 Partners' Questionnaire

- Partners' anonymised responses are shown in full at Appendix 6.

### 5.2.1 Current problems or gaps in services

- Partners were asked to comment specifically on services for parents and young children in the Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West areas, the locations for the forthcoming Children's Centres.
- More childcare facilities were considered vital for all children ranging from babies to those in school. These included crèche facilities, playgroups, nursery places, full-day childcare and care for children during school holidays. It was stressed that these should all be low-priced (perhaps even including a few free places) so that they would be 'affordable' to as many families as possible.
- The need was identified for more suitable activities for families with young children during both term-time and school holidays.
- It was considered that there was a lack of suitable training and some negative peer pressure where looking for work was concerned. One respondent also mentioned apathy and often misguided ideas as to the effects entering work would have on, for example, housing and childcare.
- The need was also identified for more professional help to parents – specifically, easier access to school nurses and health visitors, more speech and language therapy and more support with parenting issues. Linked to this was one respondent's view that the current numbers of professional staff were seriously over-stretched – in other words, that there were not enough health visitors, nursery nurses and administrative staff to manage services and run much-needed groups, including the running of groups.
- Some respondents explained this current pressure on resources as one of the consequences of the recent increase in housing development, which had taken place without any comparable increase in either GP provision or health visiting resources.
- Social isolation was mentioned as a problem for young parents, and one that could be alleviated by the provision of appropriate centres for them to attend. It was also pointed out that this was particularly relevant to Hucknall North and Central where there are currently few community buildings as possible venues.
- Specific gaps identified by partners are:
  - Playgroups, especially in the new areas of housing development
  - Appropriate centres for parents to attend
  - Availability of services and groups for teenagers
  - A convenient, local Job Centre
  - Educational opportunities for young parents on diet, exercise and childcare

### 5.2.2 Likely impact of the Children's Centres

- Most of the partners had positive expectations of the Children's Centres. They hoped they would stimulate:
  - The likelihood of a wider range of services and facilities, which was considered to be much needed locally

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- Easier access to local services, and thereby more support for families.
- A more efficient approach, through the streamlining and better integration of services, to the meeting of families' needs
- Centralised services to promote partnership working and help professionals to 'signpost' parents quickly and appropriately
- The development of an educative role within the Children's Centres
- A focal point for parents, in a relaxed environment, where they could be introduced to services and provided with relevant information
- The fulfilment of parents' expectations that the Children's Centres would provide similar input from health services to that presently available in Hucknall East, from Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre.

At the same time though, concerns were expressed by two respondents. One feared that extra pressures would be put on local health services due to the lack of extra resources. Another referred to the risk of 'a blanket approach' to service provision, with a focus less on outreach and more on accessibility – in the sense that families would be helped to access general services available in the community, rather than being offered more individual help in their own homes.

### 5.2.3 Biggest challenge in developing the Children's Centres

The partners identified two principal challenges:

- The first was to ensure that all relevant agencies were involved from the start; in this way, 'real' partnerships would be created and developed, making it more likely that the Children's Centres would evolve in ways that reflected the hopes and aspirations of local workers.
- The second challenge was considered to be the successful targeting of the more vulnerable families who could benefit most from the facilities and services on offer; it might then be possible to encourage some of these parents to become involved in the running of the Children's Centres, and in so doing to develop a sense of ownership and influence in contributing to future plans.

However, Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West are very different in their problems and needs, and each of the areas will present its own challenges.

### 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.

- Fewer than half the respondents answered this question, which suggests that the holding of such meetings is not a regular occurrence.
- This was supported by the replies of three others, which indicated a degree of apathy or lack of commitment where such meetings were concerned – 'not always told – despite asking'; 'not very often'; 'meetings stopped due to lack of interest'.

- However, three respondents considered such meetings to be useful if they have a clear focus and purpose, backed up by a formal agenda. None thought they should be too frequent because they were time-consuming, especially for part-time staff. One suggested a maximum of four a year.
- One respondent mentioned the Parents' Forum that is held at the Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre every 1-2 months. She found this very useful, but commented that it was hard to persuade parents to become involved.
- Another respondent said that she was part of the management group for the Butler's Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre and also the local community operations group, which deals with funding and setting up local community-based training. Parents are invited to both groups and meetings are held every 3 months.

The partners' responses to this question underline the need for the Children's Centre Development Team to support cross-agency communication and joint working, while encouraging the active participation of parents and carers from the local community.

### 5.2.5 Top priorities for Hucknall

- 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:
  - *"Targeting the vulnerable families"*
  - *"Consulting parents and existing community groups"*
  - *"Encouraging parents to be involved"*
  - *"Providing what parents actually need"*
- Their replies also revealed their hopes about the values that should underpin the delivery of services in the area:
  - *"Flexibility"*
  - *"Pro-active work"*
  - *"Accessibility and visibility"*
  - *"Working with them in a place they feel comfortable"*

These included financial considerations:

- *"Affordable childcare"*
- *"Ensuring free/low-priced crèche facility"*

and the desire for high standards of service:

- *"Quality wrap-around care"*
- *"Delivery of quality health promotion activities"*
- *"Advertising and cementing strong partnership links"*

- More specific suggestions about what is needed were:
  - Speech therapy provision

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- School nurse monthly drop-in sessions
- Parenting skills
- Better up-to-date information on database for parents
- More outreach to existing groups
- Better playing areas, inside and out for under-5s
- Out-of-hours service
- Extended hours of childcare
- Affordable childcare
- Flexible working hours
- Holiday activities and care for under-5s
- More health visitor time
- Crèche facilities
- Playgroups, especially for pre-nursery children
- More nursery provision (on school premises)
- Job-related training
- Interagency collaboration
- Close partnership working.

### 5.3 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were run on the same day, one in the morning at 'Under One Roof', a community organisation in the centre of Hucknall, and the other in the afternoon at the Seymour Road Baptist Church in the Ruffs Estate in the West of Hucknall. The locations were chosen in order to attract parents from the two locations identified for the consultation.

#### 5.3.1 Focus Group 1 – Hucknall North and Central

- Of the 12 parents who had confirmed the previous day that they would attend the focus group, 10 actually arrived for the session, although one was unable to stay because of difficulties with the crèche arrangements. The ages of the children for each parent attending the group were as follows:
  - Five children, ranging from 3-19 years
  - 4, 9 and 12 years
  - 2, 4 and 8 years
  - 6 months
  - 4 years
  - 4 months
  - 5 and 7 years
  - 2, 3 and 6 years
  - two children (ages not given but in under-5 and 5-11 age groups)
- The discussion guide used in the focus group will be found in Appendix 4. This included areas which reflected the main sections of the parents' questionnaire:
  - Knowledge of services in the area
  - Strengths and weaknesses of current services
  - Gaps in current provision
  - Good things to come from the development of the Children's Centre
  - Areas for improvement in the local area
- The focus group participants were initially invited to undertake a mapping exercise in order to collate information about services and activities in the area. This can be seen in Appendix 7.
- This showed a good spread of activities across most days of the week but with relatively little provision on Friday, Wednesday morning and Monday afternoon.
- The parents pointed out that the toddler group and playgroup provision was limited to term-time (with the exception of a holiday club at Leen Mills Playgroup) and that several of the other sessions had quite a specific focus on new parents or parents of young babies.
- They commented that while there is provision for under-fives every day of the week, the venues are quite widely dispersed across Hucknall. For parents who do not drive, it was often impractical to attend a toddler group session with a younger child because of the time it takes to drop and collect older children who are at nursery or school.

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- The parents also made the point that many services have waiting lists and therefore cannot be used occasionally or spontaneously. This was said to be particularly restrictive for registered childminders who need accessible activities for different children on different days.
- Some parents said that they were unable to make use of the facilities of the existing Sure Start Children's Centre at Butler's Hill because it was too far away for them to walk and not on a direct bus route.
- The parents agreed that the mapping exercise had been useful in extending their own knowledge of local provision. Comments included:

*"There's quite a lot of things I've never heard of."*

*" I didn't realise half the things that are on this board and I'm a childminder - I have to find things to do."*

### 5.3.2 Services most useful to families

- The focus group members were asked to identify the services they found most useful to them as parents. Those they mentioned had benefits for themselves and for their children.
- Pre-school playgroups were seen as an important resource for families, providing regular child-care support for parents while giving children a taste of independence and a chance to mix with others:

*" It's been that that's got them used to being away from me and to get them mixing ready to go to school."*

- Another mother agreed and said it had been important to her that she had been allowed to stay with her child at the beginning and then wean herself away.
- There was general agreement that the provision for children of all ages by the Library Service was excellent. Most of the parents used Hucknall Library but those using Edgewood Library were similarly enthusiastic. The positive attitudes of the staff and their eagerness to help prompted comments such as:

*"They love going. We go once a week. They (the library staff) really go out of their way."*

*"It's really child-friendly. We would be lost without it."*

- The Tuesday Story Time session at Hucknall Library was popular and the parents also appreciated the free summer activities provided at both libraries. These filled a gap when toddler groups and playgroups were closed.
- The only problem associated with using Hucknall Library was the lack of toilets. This made life particularly difficult for parents who were toilet-training their children. One said:

*"They should have toilets everywhere that provides services for young children."*

- A young mother of a baby said that she had received extensive support from the Sure Start Children's Centre at Butler's Hill. She had used the sensory room with her baby and had taken part in baby massage and baby movement sessions. She visited her midwife there and regularly attended activity sessions twice a week.

### 5.3.3 Experiences of health care services

- Two parents had experience of seeking health care support for severely disabled children. In one case, the child had contracted a life-threatening illness in the early months of life, leaving her with serious problems; in the other, the child had been born with multiple and complex disabilities and had subsequently died.
- Although the first mother described her GP as "*fantastic*", she said that it had been a struggle to find a practice that would take her child on and had felt excluded by the seriousness of her medical condition. She had felt criticised rather than supported by other health care staff and said that this had made her feel very isolated. Her only support had come from a local day nursery where she was able to obtain a place for her daughter. A member of staff at the nursery had child-minded a child with the same condition and was able to give her the individual care she needed.
- The second mother had also encountered unsympathetic attitudes and a lack of support from local services, saying "*I felt totally alone and isolated.*" Valuable support had been provided for two days each week by the Continuing Care Team from the Queens Medical Centre. These carers were not medically trained but were described by the mother as highly committed. In comparing their attitudes with those she had encountered among local health care personnel, she commented:

*"Not one person from Hucknall even bothered to ring up and say, 'Are you alright?'"*

- One local GP practice was criticised for the cramped conditions in its waiting room and the lack of provision of toys and facilities for children. Added to this was the severe manner of the receptionist - "*She's took dragon lessons*" - making a visit to the doctor's a stressful experience, even though some of the doctors themselves were described as excellent.
- One mother said that she took toys, reading books and drawing books with her whenever she went to the surgery in order to entertain their children during the waiting periods. When the parents themselves were unwell, however, it was difficult to find the energy to keep young children occupied:

*"It just doesn't make it easy when you're poorly. It just doesn't make it easy at all."*

- Provision for children at another practice was said to be much better:

*"They do have books and a play table and a wooden bead frame, and that makes all the difference."*

- In contrast to the negative experience of local health care professionals by some parents within the group, a new mother said that her health visitor had given her excellent support and information when her new baby was born. She said:

*“I’ve had support all the way. From having her, I’ve always had someone I could talk to.”*

- Her experience in obtaining information is discussed more fully in the next section.

### 5.3.4 Finding out about services

- Most of the parents said that it was difficult to find out about services in any systematic way. They said that they tended to glean information by word of mouth or by chance:

*“From friends or just watching a queue of people going somewhere.”*

- Another option was to “*trawl through*” the various items of information held at the Curtis Street Health Centre when they went there to have their babies weighed.
- The general view was that if parents did not make the effort themselves actively to seek out information, it would not be presented to them. And even if they did seek it out, it was difficult to obtain a comprehensive and up-to-date picture:

*“Everything’s written down but you’ve got to go and find it. Nobody’s going to tell you about it.”*

- However, as noted above, the experience of one new mother was very different. When her new baby arrived, her health visitor had gone out of her way to give her information and, in particular, to introduce her to Bibs, the breast-feeding support group at the Sure Start Children’s Centre, which she had found excellent and through which she had met a new circle of friends. Summing up this help, she said:

*“When she was born, my health visitor came out and she gave me a whole booklet about what to do...she couldn’t do enough for us.”*

- For this mother, the only way in which the supply of information could have been improved would have been to receive it before her baby arrived, so that she could have been better prepared in advance. It is assumed that the booklet referred to is the ‘Services for Families’ Directory provided by the Hucknall Children and Families network (a group of local organisations) which is regularly updated and distributed across Hucknall.
- When asked about the best ways of providing accurate information in the future, the parents said that there should be a variety of distribution points, including ante-natal clinics, baby clinics, GP surgeries, toddler groups, local libraries and web pages for the Nottingham area on the BBC News website.
- Another suggestion was that the local paper, the Hucknall Despatch, should carry a regular spread to advertise both established provision and one-off activities. This could perhaps be hosted by the Children’s Information Service or

by Nottinghamshire County Council so that the expense did not fall upon local groups.

- There were mixed views about the value of Primary Times (a free information magazine for parents and teachers of primary school children) as a source of information about what was happening in the area. One mother had found it “*useless*” because it contained little information of direct relevance to Hucknall and thought it was therefore helpful only to parents with cars. Others disagreed, saying that they had been able to get to some of the advertised venues by public transport and that the information always included a phone number or a link to a website for transport details. Several parents had found it to be a valuable source of information about free events in Nottingham over the summer holidays.

### 5.3.5 Access to public transport

- Access to public transport was a very important issue for the parents in the focus group because of their need to access services outside Hucknall and because of the recent re-structuring of local transport services with the arrival of the tram line to Nottingham.
- Opinions about the adequacy and accessibility of services differed within the group. In particular, the parents were divided in their views about the tram service. On the positive side, one said:

*“I think the tram’s fantastic. I think it’s been a great lifeline for Hucknall.”*

- But another mother said that for those without cars who lived at a distance from the tram, it was now more difficult to get out of Hucknall, requiring two bus journeys rather than one.
- While some parents found the all-day combined tram and bus ticket excellent value, others said that they would prefer to be able to travel to a single destination and back at a cheaper price.

### 5.3.6 Improvements needed in Hucknall

- The parents were asked to identify improvements that would make life better for families with young children in Hucknall.

#### *Better parks*

- Top of their list were better, cleaner parks with more facilities and equipment for young children.
- They complained that Titchfield Park was dangerous and dirty - strewn with needles and glass – and that the park attendants did not seem to care when things got damaged. If they challenged vandals themselves, they risked being subject to verbal abuse
- The parents said that the park outside the Leisure Centre was even worse, with only a few pieces of equipment and ripped surfacing:

*“It’s diabolical. It’s like a bomb’s exploded. We call it the rubbish park.”*

- While large, well-equipped and well-maintained parks were needed, the parents also wanted more small, neighbourhood parks where they could take their children to play football or just let off steam.
- Their dissatisfaction was heightened by the feeling that other parts of Ashfield and the surrounding boroughs were much better served. They identified parks elsewhere (such as Carr Bank Park in Mansfield and Arnot Hill Park in Gedling) that were not only kept in better condition and had better facilities but also offered free activities for children during the holidays.
- They also noted that while the Ashfield Play Forum organised Play Days throughout the summer holidays, these never came to Hucknall.
- They believed that the problem was political in origin and that Hucknall was not given equal priority with neighbouring towns by Nottinghamshire County Council or by Ashfield District Council. The unfortunate consequence, in their view, was inferior public facilities.
- Although excellent free activities were available in Nottingham during the holidays, the cost of travel meant that families had little money to spend once they had arrived.

*More drop-in facilities in the centre of town*

- Another priority for the parents was to have drop-in provision in the centre of town, which was open every day and which could be used flexibly without pre-booking. This would allow mothers with young children in pushchairs to pop in for short periods between shopping and picking up their older children from nursery and school. It would need to offer toys and activities for children of different ages and perhaps a small café where parents could buy a hot drink. It was said that at present many mothers wandered aimlessly around town after dropping their children off until it was time to pick them up again, and that the centre of town was an unsafe environment for small children because of the traffic congestion.

**5.3.7 Ideas about the new Children's Centre**

- The parents hoped that the Children's Centre being planned to serve Central and North Hucknall would be able to incorporate the kind of central drop-in provision that they advocated. A discussion followed about the best site for the Children's Centre, given that it would not be a new build but located within an existing community building.
- Several parents said that they had regretted the closure of the Spring Street Centre, which they felt had left an enormous gap in the centre of Hucknall. However, they said that this site was now being developed commercially as a soft play centre and believed that it would not be available to house the new Children's Centre.
- The advantages of 'Under One Roof' as a possible base for the Children's Centre were seen to be its central location and its good café, offering healthy food at low prices. These advantages were offset, however, by the restricted parking and the limited space available for development inside the building.
- The parents said that they thought that none of the local schools could accommodate a Children's Centre.

- The parents' then discussed that that in an ideal world their preferred location for a new building would be the empty Safeway site, which had the advantages of a central location and ample space for parking. They recognised that this was a very large area but argued that other community facilities, such as an ice rink might be included in the development. Within a site of this size, it would be possible to provide a wide range of activities for families with children of all ages and this would be a significant asset to the community. They were reminded that there were no capital plans for a Children's Centre building in Central Hucknall.

### **5.3.8 Focus Group 2 – Hucknall West**

- Of the 13 parents who had confirmed the previous day that they would attend the focus group, 10 actually arrived for the session. The ages of the children of parents attending the group were as follows:
  - 4 and 6 years
  - 4 and 12 years
  - 2 and 6 years
  - 1, 2, 9 and 11 years
  - 16 months
  - 21 months
  - 3 and 5 years
  - 3 and 5 years
  - 16 month old twins
  - 7 months and 4 years
- The discussion guide used in the focus group was the same as that used for the morning session (see above and Appendix 4).
- The focus group participants were initially invited to undertake a mapping exercise in order to collate information about services and activities in the area. This can be seen in Appendix 7.
- There was a considerable degree of overlap with the first focus group in terms of the toddler groups and playgroups identified. However, none of the parents in the afternoon focus group mentioned sessions at the Sure Start Children's Centre or the groups for new mothers at the Health Centre and Community Centre.
- They did, however, identify some activities that had not been mentioned by the parents in the first focus group, namely the Jo Jingles music session at the Roman Catholic church, the Applegarth Day Nursery, and the toddler swimming and Active Ants sessions at the Leisure Centre.
- As a result, the map produced by the second focus group showed a different distribution of services across the week, with relatively little provision highlighted on Thursdays and Wednesday afternoons.
- Like the first group participants, they pointed out that the timing of toddler group and nursery session sometimes made it difficult for parents to use them both. They did note, however, that the Monday afternoon session of the Salvation Army toddler group had been introduced in order to give another option to parents who could not attend the morning session because their older children were at nursery.

### 5.3.9 Services most useful to families

- The focus group members were asked to identify the services they had found most useful to them as parents. As in the first group, they tended to focus upon services that offered the benefits of play and socialisation to their children, which they saw as complementing and supporting their own role as parents.
- The toddler groups at the Central Methodist Church and Annie Holgate school were singled out as particularly good and helpful. The former was described as having *“stacks of toys, puzzles and climbing equipment”*, while the latter was said to offer an excellent preparation for school because the session was rather more structured than at most toddler groups, so that, for example, the children were encouraged to sit down together for toast and orange juice. Getting to know the school environment and the staff was seen as another advantage.
- Some parents felt that children could become confused if they attended too many toddler groups and said that it was best to stick with one that suited both parent and child. However, a mother with 16 month old twin boys said that attending sessions at different places during the week helped her to cope:

*“I go out for my own sanity. I can’t stand being in the house. It drives me round the bend. So I go to as many as possible.”*

- There was concern about the long-term viability of some of the toddler groups in Hucknall. It was reported, for example, that one had recently lost 19 children to nursery and that it might have to close down.
- The Library was once again identified as a very helpful service, staffed by people with very positive attitudes towards children. The parents appreciated the provision of facilities for children of all ages, including a play area for the under fives and books and computer facilities for the older ones. One parent said:

*“I can’t believe how much it’s improved”.*

- As in the first group, however, the lack of toilet facilities at the Library was seen as a drawback, particularly when attending with very small children.
- The Applegarth Day Nursery offered a service that was particularly valued by one parent for its variety and structure. Her children attended a morning session, which included both indoor and outdoor play, reading time and a snack time when the children sat together around a table.

### 5.3.10 Experiences of health care services

- These parents’ experiences of health care were in general considerably more positive than those reported in the morning focus group. Several parents said that their doctors were *“brilliant”* because of their responsiveness and generally positive attitudes. The Tolkard and Byron practices drew particular praise for their helpfulness. Another practice, however, was described in rather more lukewarm terms because of its longer waiting times, the lack of space to wait with a baby in a buggy and the abrupt manner of the receptionist.

- One mother said that she had been disappointed and distressed by the lack of response from health visitors to her repeated pleas for help with her baby's poor feeding and simultaneous tendency to gain excess weight. She compared the service she had received unfavourably with that given by health visitors in Broxtowe where she had lived previously.

### 5.3.11 Finding out about services

- Like the parents in the morning focus group, these parents felt that they had found out about local provision in quite a haphazard way, relying heavily upon word of mouth information from friends. They too felt that they had an incomplete picture of what was available:

*“Half the time, you just don't know.”*

- Even when information was available, it was often not up to date. For example, one parent said that she had been given a list of toddler groups and playgroups when she moved back to Hucknall but that she turned up at the wrong time to one session because the times had changed from those printed in the leaflet.
- The parents recalled that information about services for children had formerly been placed at the Library but that this had now been discontinued and that they thought that the Sure Start Children's Centre was the only information point. It should be noted that the existing Children's Centre currently only serves the Hucknall East ward, so this should not be the case.
- Like those in the morning group, the parents felt that it would be helpful to have information placed at many different locations – including the Library, baby weighing clinics and toddler groups - in order for it to reach as many families as possible. They too liked the idea of a weekly section in the local paper advertising services for families and children.
- The parents believed that updating and disseminating information is vitally important and should be a consistent part of someone's role. They thought that no one had overall responsibility for this, although they were aware that a worker at the Children's Centre had done some work on her own initiative. They were aware of the useful Services Directory but not aware of who had produced it.

*“There needs to be somebody to take control of it, to check every few months, to compile a list of everything that's on and to be responsible for putting this list in different places because obviously different people use different things.”*

- Some parents suggested that the health visitor would be the most appropriate person to take this on but others said that the health visitor service in Hucknall was already severely stretched. Another suggestion was for the Council to pay a worker to perform this information function for Hucknall and neighbouring areas. It should be noted that this is a key element of the role of community involvement within Children's Centres. So this will happen as the staffing team in Hucknall grows.
- There was a view within the group that toddler groups, playgroups and other regular services should take more responsibility for ensuring that printed information about their sessions was up to date, or at least for providing a telephone number which would enable parents to check current details. Others

said that where sessions were already busy, those in charge might not be motivated to advertise them more extensively.

### 5.3.12 Access issues in Hucknall

- While the parents in the morning focus group had considered access to services primarily in terms of public transport, those in the second group addressed a broader range of issues.
- There was a general feeling within the group that the centre of Hucknall was not accessible or child-friendly. Narrow pavements, shop doorways and aisles made shopping a difficult and frustrating experience, particularly for parents pushing double buggies.
- An additional problem for those who did not live close to the town centre was that car parks were not located close to the shops. One mother said she would prefer to go into Nottingham and park her car close to the shops.
- Hucknall was said to be a very bad place for toilet-training small children because of the lack of clean and accessible public toilets. The only public toilet was in the main square. The parents reported that although this had been done up quite recently, it remained smelly and the doors sometimes did not open when money was inserted.
- Some parents were disappointed that the Sure Start Children's Centre was not more accessible for parents who lived beyond walking distance and who therefore needed to drive there. The very limited parking at the Centre and the risk of being blocked in the car park when the children came out of school were regarded as major disincentives. It should be noted however that the existing Children's Centre was not built to serve families living in Hucknall West.
- Provision at the Leisure Centre for crèche and soft play facilities was criticised because the room was in a dirty condition; moreover, the room was located on the first floor of the building, the lift was broken and it was impossible for mothers to carry buggies upstairs.

### 5.3.13 Improvements needed in Hucknall

- The parents were asked to identify improvements that would make life better for families with young children in Hucknall.

#### *Better parks*

- As in the morning group, the provision of better and cleaner parks was seen as the most important priority. The parents wanted existing parks, particularly the Titchfield and Nabbs Lane parks, to be cleaned up, made secure at night and cared for by regular wardens. They also called for play equipment that was appropriate for children of all ages.
- Like the participants in the morning group, these parents felt that they and their children got little benefit from local parks because of their poor and dangerous condition. Litter and broken glass were said to be a problem at all parks,

particularly at the weekends. The park at the Leisure Centre was described as “super nasty”.

- While recognising that some efforts had been made to improve Titchfield Park, for example by introducing new equipment for older children, the parents felt that more attention needed to be paid to providing for younger age groups. Existing play equipment for the younger ones had been damaged by older children, including the safety flooring, which was said to now be a trip hazard.
- The practice of closing the small neighbourhood parks at 3.30pm meant that parents and children could not use them after school.
- Narrow park gates were said to make access difficult for double-buggies and three-wheelers. One mother reported that she had broken a pushchair while trying to push it through a gate.

#### *Clubs for different age groups*

- They also identified a need for local children’s clubs catering for different age groups, from pre-school children to teenagers, including holiday clubs where children could be left during the day. There was reported to be only one existing holiday club offering day care for children in the 5-11 year age group, and some parents felt that this was over-priced.

#### **5.3.14 Ideas about the new Children’s Centres**

- Some parents were unhappy about the location of the new Children’s Centre at Annie Holgate School. They were concerned that the development had reduced facilities at the school through the loss of a library, classroom and toilet block. They were also anxious about the lack of parking facilities on site and about the access road leading onto a busy main road. Inadequate fencing, which made the site open to intruders, was a further concern. It should perhaps be noted that the library and toilet block will in fact be replaced and additional fencing and parking provided.
- Two parents who had attended sessions at the Butler’s Hill and Broomhill Children’s Centre had ceased to do so because they felt excluded by the regular users of the Centre’s drop-in provision. It was their perception that these users regarded the Centre as a place to relax and to delegate the care of their children to others.

*“You used to go and you’d have a room full of people and a wall of chairs with people sitting on them and they would not get off those chairs for the whole time they were there... You’d end up as crowd control for all these kids.”*

- The same parents praised the staff at the Children’s Centre and the courses and activities available. However, they felt that they were regarded as intruders by the regular users of the drop-ins. They believed that the Children’s Centre needed more staff – specifically, staff who were trained to help parents engage in activities with their children.
- They said that the issues that had arisen in relation to the Butler’s Hill and Broomhill Children’s Centre should be taken into account in planning the layout,

services and staffing of the new Children's Centre provision for Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West.

#### **5.4 Issues arising from the Consultation**

The community consultation in Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West, comprising interviews with parents, the parents' focus group and a written questionnaire to service providers, indicated the following:

- a general positive response to the idea of the development of more Children's Centre provision in Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West but specific concerns about its location and the need for adequate publicity to keep local families informed.
- a desire that the new Children's Centres should be open to all parents and not dominated by specific user groups.
- a request that the timings of provision for under-fives in Hucknall should be harmonised so that parents with children at school nurseries are better able to take advantage of provision targeted at babies and toddlers.
- the need for a dynamic and co-ordinated strategy for sharing and updating information about provision for families with young children in Hucknall, so that this information is accurate and widely disseminated, preferably in the written form of newsletters, flyers and local newspaper articles.
- a demand for childcare to complement school provision, particularly with regard to holiday care.
- The need to address the current shortage of public toilet and baby-changing facilities

#### **5.5 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 Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West for the future.

These include:

- The information needs of families with young children, which are urgent and need to be addressed systematically.
  - Play, sports and leisure activities in Hucknall for young children, particularly in local parks, which should be given the same priority for development and maintenance as in surrounding areas.
  - All relevant agencies should be involved from the start, so that 'real' partnerships would not only be created but also sustained in guiding the development of the Children's Centres in ways that reflected the hopes of local workers.
  - There should be a commitment to the targeting of the most vulnerable families who would benefit most from the facilities and services on offer.
- While the consultation necessarily had its limitations, due to lack of time and resources, 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 develop the new Children's Centres in Hucknall North and Central and Hucknall West.

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- There is the need to assure parents and partners that Children's Centres are sustainable and that the involvement of all parties is crucial to its success, as well as allowing parents to take ownership of Children's Centres, 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 Children's Centre services 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.

### **6. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Parents' Questionnaire

Appendix 2 – Showcards

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire for Service Providers/Partners

Appendix 4 – Discussion Guide for Sure Start Children's Centres Focus Groups

Appendix 5 – 'Other' Responses from Parents' Questionnaire

Appendix 6 – Responses from Partners and Service Providers

Appendix 7 – Mapping exercise: Current Services in Hucknall North and Central, and Hucknall West from parents and partners