

*Manton Children's Centre  
Community Consultation –  
Executive Summary*

Written by: Janet Lang, LANG RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

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45 Caledon Road  
Nottingham  
NG5 2NF  
0115 841 2844  
[janet.lang@ntlworld.com](mailto:janet.lang@ntlworld.com)

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	3
The Focus Groups.....	3
Issues in Manton .....	4
Ideas for Improvements in Manton .....	5
The Development of the Children’s Centre in Manton.....	5
Partners’ Views.....	6
The Parents’ Questionnaire .....	7

## Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire has identified 21 communities which will have a Children's Centres completed in early 2006, and a further 27 will follow in Round Two, due to be completed by March 2008.
2. Children's Centres will 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.
3. 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 for parents to access training and employment.
4. The overall purpose of the consultation in Manton, as elsewhere, was to inform the community about the forthcoming Children's Centre development, to 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 Manton Children's Centre.
5. The full report discusses the consultation in greater detail; the report, with appendices, is available from Di Kingaby, Children's Centre Development Officer or Janet Lang, Consultant and author of this report, or will shortly be available as a pdf file from [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/eydcp/childrenscentres](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/eydcp/childrenscentres). Copies of the full report will also be available at the Community Consultation feedback session, 9 February 2006, at Manton Primary school, 9am.

## Methodology

6. After initial meetings with partners to explain the purpose and process of the consultation, semi-structured self-completion questionnaires were completed and subsequently returned by 12 service providers.
7. A training session was provided for local workers, school staff and volunteer parents prior to interviews with local parents, to familiarise them with the format of the questionnaire, and issues of conducting interviews.
8. School staff, Children's Centre staff, a few parents and other local workers subsequently conducted interviews with 79 parents and carers, of whom 41 volunteered to take part in the planned focus groups, the first one held at Manton School and another at Ryton Park School. This is an indication of the keen interest shown by parents in the idea of a Children's Centre where they live.
9. Further details of the results of the questionnaire are on page 6.

## The Focus Groups

10. Ten parents were subsequently selected at random from the 24 willing parents/carers at Manton School for the focus group, of whom 9 took part, including one dad.
11. At the second group at Ryton Park School, 9 parents also attended, including one dad.
12. Between them, respondents had 37 children, with 22 of these aged 5 or under.
13. Most respondents had more than one child - apart from two mums with one child, 8 had 2 children, 5 had 3 children, and 1 had 4 children with the average number of children in the family being 2.3.
14. Most parents had lived in the area all of their lives, although a few had moved from outside of the area, often from somewhere with a Sure Start.
15. They carried out a mapping of services and activities, which demonstrated a lack of available services for the under 5s - full details in the main report.
16. On the whole, the findings reflected the results from the questionnaire (see page 6).

## Issues in Manton

17. Parents generally tended to suggest that there were few services for the under 5s or for themselves in Manton, whilst much of what they did access was in Worksop.
18. Parents often reported that they sometimes found it easier not to attend sessions or appointments because of conflicting times and difficult-to-reach locations, and the cost and hassle of using public transport.
19. One of the dads said that there were no specific activities for him as a dad, and that any sessions that were suitable for the age of his children seemed aimed at women.
20. Those parents who had used the Playzone activity centre for children in Worksop mentioned it enthusiastically as they liked the idea of all their children, up to the aged of 12, being able to play at the same place, for a reasonable amount, with tiered charges for more than one child.
21. The School Nursery was recognised as a service that was the most helpful to them as parents because they said that it stops this age group of children getting bored at home and gives parents a break.
22. Most of the parents who knew about the Stay & Play sessions welcomed them, but those without school age children, and those at Ryton Park School, didn't know about them until invited to attend the focus group.
23. Health Visitors were seen as the most useful service to parents, providing helpful advice, although a few did not like the way they commented on issues such as smoking or young parents.
24. It was agreed that support and advice rather than criticism was needed, to give parents' confidence, which could be undermined, especially if conflicting advice was received from midwives or family.
25. One mum spoke of how she had developed a good relationship with her Health Visitor once they had got to know one another.
26. Most seemed to have had a good experience and continuity of service from midwives, although few considered that antenatal was necessary after the first child.
27. Some suggested the doctors' practice as the most useful service to them, but there was strong disagreement about this, largely dependent on which practice parents used.
28. The Newgate Street practice was most strongly criticised for having no toys, difficult access to the upstairs surgery via a small lift, no safe storage of pushchairs and a non-parent-friendly appointment system.
29. Parents who were registered with the Larwood surgery were much more enthusiastic with the service received, with its child-friendly appointment system.
30. Parents felt it was important for their children to be registered with a dentist, in order to ensure their teeth were well looked after but spoke about the difficulty of getting to see a dentist in Worksop, as NHS lists appear to be full.
31. Another problem that parents spoke about was the amount of dog muck found on the streets in Manton, but some thought that money spent on special bins for dog muck was a waste because the bins would get vandalised or would not be used. But others said that there was a need for litterbins as well.
32. Everybody knew about the Manton Community Alliance although not all were sure about what it actually does for the neighbourhood. One respondent was still involved with the Alliance, while another had been in the past.
33. While most felt the individuals involved were approachable and well intentioned, several felt that the Alliance didn't advertise itself or its events as much as it could, but that distribution of newsletters from any source was liable to be problematic.
34. Some of these parents had been to the Albion Family Centre, but this was seen as a place for people with problems, so there were concerns about being seen going into the building, and especially the impression it might give other people. They thought that Manton people were often prejudiced about a place or service, which might take time to remove.

35. Many seemed to feel that the Shrewsbury Road Community Centre was not a facility to which they had been keen to go, that it catered for *other* people, not for them, although some had been on courses there quite happily.
36. Some parents, with a disabled child or a child with special needs, spoke of the problem of dealing with some difficult situations locally, and especially in the differences between Manton Primary and Ryton Park Schools, as the former seemed less able to offer support for some children with particular needs. They also spoke of the difficulty with the bus service locally, which does not have a plentiful supply of buses with pushchair friendly access.
37. Parents with young children felt very uncomfortable in the Job Centre, as if they were not welcomed. Parents reporting being asked to leave if children were crying, and that there were no facilities for breast-feeding, or toys for children.
38. In contrast, parents at Ryton Park agreed that they appreciated the manner in which the school and nursery staff spoke to them and their children, which made them feel valued as a person.
39. Some parents spoke about the lack of suitable jobs that would fit around school times, and the cost and availability of good childcare in the school holidays.
40. They also were concerned about leaving their children in the care of someone unknown and in whom they did not have confidence.
41. The lack of confidence in their children's ability to stay with unknown people did not extend to school or nursery, as this was compulsory, something over which they had no choice, compared to leaving them at a childminders, who had a negative image, in their minds, compared to nursery.
42. One mum at Manton School expressed the frustration felt amongst them.

*"Everyone's trying to make Manton better, Manton can't be better until we've earned money, and we can't earn money when we've got no decent childcare, and we do care about our kids, and we don't just want to leave them, we don't want to dump them on the street and pay a fortune for it into the bargain."*

#### Ideas for Improvements in Manton

43. One parent made the suggestion of a local drop-in clinic, especially where other mums with young babies or newly pregnant women would be, to give one another support and reduce the feeling of isolation, which many had experienced, and this was well received.
44. The stress of having to cope with small children at the doctors lead to the suggestion from a mum about the need for a crèche or similar at the doctors, especially to avoid or reduce dependency on the family, where available.
45. All parents spontaneously mentioned the need for a park and/or playground in the area, for all ages of children, and Ryton Park parents were keen to see smaller parks in different parts of the area, to provide a something for all children, feeling that one large central park would be less well used.
46. Most parents were not convinced about the planned playground on the Community Centre grounds, feeling it would not be well used, being out-of-site and too far away for young children to use it.
47. Some parents thought that some play equipment for young children on the Edinburgh Road site was planned, but this was unclear.
48. Other requirements of this group were for activities for children in the school holidays, including the under 5s, especially where children and mums could attend together.

#### The Development of the Children's Centre in Manton

49. There seems to be a level of disillusionment amongst some parents in Manton that involvement with the MCA is proving difficult for them; this is something that the Children's Centre team needs to be aware of when developing partnership working.

50. Some parents mentioned their concern about the use of the name Children's Centre, suggesting it implied social services had 'taken over'. They felt that work would need to be done to ensure the stigma attached to social services did not transfer to the Children's Centre.
51. Word of mouth was felt to be very important in reducing this stigma, and would also be preferable to newsletters that either might not be seen, or would be a problem for those with dyslexia or literacy problems.
52. Some found it hard to identify what improvements would come about with the arrival of the Children's Centre, but those who had experienced a Sure Start talked enthusiastically about potential benefits.
53. Other parents thought these initiatives would be good for them and Manton in general, provided they were well advertised to encourage take-up and ongoing use, so as not to waste more money.
54. They generally did not have any concerns about the arrival of the Children's Centre in Manton, although there were anxieties about the lack of a specific venue and how this would work in practice.
55. Alternatively, those who had been told that the building was to be built at Manton School had been concerned that this would not be central enough for access by all of the community so parents from both schools seemed pleased when told this was not believed to be the case.
56. Some felt that because the children of people in the MCA generally attended Manton School, this was seen as the focal point of all activities in the area, so a more central location and inclusive organisation would be better for the community.
57. It seems that there are some parents who are disinclined to get involved with Manton Primary School, maybe for historical reasons, and one service provider respondent has also mentioned this. It will be important to encourage parents to use any venue that delivers services for them and their children, but this may take time.
58. Some parents thought a centre with swimming, ice-skating, soft play and activities for all ages of children would be ideal for the community. The preliminary results from the information evening that took place in November, in which local residents were invited to say what they would like from a potential centre for sport, education and healthy living, also identified that Sports facilities were high on the list of requirements, although this centre aims to be more than that. Future work in conjunction with the development of the Children's Centre will be vital.
59. The concerns that some parents feel about leaving their child with someone unknown, and the long term suspicion of some services or organisations will mean that it may take time for the Children's Centre to become accepted.
60. The relationship between the Manton Community Alliance, local parents, service providers and the Children's Centre is crucial and one that needs to be developed in a positive spirit.

### Partners' Views

61. The views of partners largely reflected those expressed by parents both in the questionnaire and the focus group – the need for more play facilities, local healthcare facilities and a focal point for parents were mentioned. (See Partners Questionnaire section, page 19 of main report).
62. Another problem highlighted was the suspicion of authority amongst parents, the cost to parents of services and their reluctance to travel far to access them.
63. Some also mentioned the relevance of the idea to local people and making sure it meets their needs so that they will engage with the Children's Centre.
64. Service providers placed much emphasis on the need for greater communication and cooperation amongst their fellow professionals and more services acting together for the benefit of parents.

*“It will focus delivery and make it easier to access services, which are sometimes spread out and hard to find.”*

65. However, it appeared that many seemed to believe that the new Children’s Centre would be placed in one building, which to date has not been agreed, and only one respondent said that explaining the concept of the initiative without a building as a focal point was the biggest challenge.
66. One respondent mentioned that there are some parents who are disinclined to get involved with Manton Primary School, maybe for historical reasons of association. This could be a barrier to success of the Children’s Centre, if parents believe the service is focused only in this part of the area, or even only in this school building.
67. Most respondents mentioned the Manton Community Alliance, with members from “a variety of local volunteer groups and educational establishments”, but the role of parents in these and other meetings was not clear.
68. When asked to specify priorities for the area, more suggestions were made for better support services for parents, followed by better facilities for children of all ages.
69. The need to engage the community in the initiative was also seen as important.

*“Making services relevant and of value to parents so they utilise these to good effect.”*

70. Full responses from service providers will be found in the Appendix to the main report.

#### The Parents’ Questionnaire

71. While 79 interviews were completed, some parents had difficulty in answering some of the questions. Caution should therefore be exercised in comparing percentages, where there was a low response.
72. 23% of parents were aware of the plans for a Children’s Centre in Manton.
73. Just over half of respondents were under the age of 29 (51%), and were predominantly female (91%). Some 66% of respondents had children under 5, while only 2 respondents said that they were pregnant. The average number of children in the family was 2.3.
74. Most households (63% or 50 respondents) had 2 adults aged over 18 living together in the household. The average number of people aged 18+ living in the household was 1.8 people and 61% were either married or partnered.
75. 39% stated they were working either full or part-time, 41% or 32 respondents said that one adult was working in the household, with 28% saying that two were working. Just over a quarter (29% or 23 people) said there was no-one working in the household.
76. Asked about their ethnic background, the majority of respondents said they were white (96%); one described their ethnic group as ‘traveller’, another as Indian.
77. Asked about local services ever used, the highest scoring were:
  - Health visitors (used by 84% of respondents)
  - GP practice (78%)
  - Midwife (75%)
  - Nursery in a school (72%)
78. The use of other support services were not so high, namely:
  - Family member (44%)
  - Antenatal (43%)
  - Job Centre (39%)
  - Children’s Library service (37%)
  - Friends (37%)
  - Toddler Group (33%)
  - After School Club (32%)
79. All other services scored less than 30% i.e. less than 1/3 of respondents claimed to use the service as listed. (See table 3 in main report)

80. 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)
81. The following scores show that these services tended to be very highly rated, but as might be expected, those providing a child-centred service were considered more child-friendly than some other services eg Nursery in a school scored a mean score of 4.9 for child-friendliness compared to the Job Centre score of 2.1.

	<i>% Ever used</i>	<i>Mean score * - usefulness</i>	<i>Mean score* - child-friendly</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Health visitors	84%	4.0	4.1	0.1
GP practices	78%	4.1	3.5	-0.6
Midwife	75%	4.7	4.4	-0.3
Nursery in a school	72%	4.8	4.9	0.1
Family member	44%	4.7	4.8	0.1
Antenatal sessions	43%	3.9	3.6	-0.3
Job Centres	39%	2.9	2.1	-0.8
Friends	37%	4.5	4.7	0.2
Children's Library service	37%	4.3	4.5	0.2
Toddler group	33%	4.7	4.7	0.0
After school club	32%	4.6	4.8	0.2

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

82. 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', with a difference in the mean scores of -0.6.
83. Reasons given for any perceived shortcomings included being 'poor advice', 'no appointment', 'Health Visitor not needed', 'no play things', 'and 'not child friendly'. (See tables 5 & 7 in main report). These were reflected in findings in the focus group.
84. The most helpful service cited by parents for themselves from the list shown was midwife (mentioned by 15% of respondents), nursery in a school (14 %), and Health Visitors (13%). (See table 9 in main report)
85. The most helpful service for the child was again said to be nursery in a school by a third of respondents (33%), followed by toddler group (13%), with Health Visitors at 9%. (See table 10 in main report)
86. Parents suggested that different times of events would help them to use services more often, followed by better public transport, particularly important to younger respondents, mentioned by 37% of those under 29 years of age. (See table 11 in main report)
87. The preference for receiving information tended to be by newsletter or information sheet, although this was not echoed in the focus groups. (See table 12 in main report)
88. Asked what 3 things Manton needs to make it better for parents with young children, the most frequently suggested ideas focused on play and leisure activities for all children. A clean up of the dog muck and litter, a Health Centre and Drop-in Centre in Manton were the next most frequent requests, although others were also mentioned. (See table 13 in main report)

Janet Lang  
Lang Research Associates  
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