

# Hawtonville Children's Centre Community Consultation – Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

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

### Questionnaire completion

5. After initial meetings with partners to explain the purpose and process of the consultation, self-completion questionnaires gathering their views were completed and returned by 20 service providers.
6. Members of the Children's Centre team and local workers conducted interviews amongst 92 parents and carers, of whom 34 volunteered to take part in the planned focus group, to be held in Hawtonville the following week. This is an indication of the keen interest shown by parents.
7. While 92 interviews were completed, some parents had difficulty in answering some of the questions, which may reflect the fact that only 18% were aware of the plans for a Children's Centre in Hawtonville.
8. The majority of respondents fell into the 30-39 age group (59%), and were predominantly female (93%). Some 63% of respondents had children under 5, while only 4 respondents said that they were pregnant.
9. 58% stated they were working either full or part-time, and 78% were either married or partnered. The average number of people aged 18+ living in the household was 1.9 people.
10. In the parent questionnaire, asked about their ethnic background, the majority of respondents said they were white (99%); no one choose to opt for 'traveller', which had been allowed for.
11. Asked about local services ever used, the highest scoring were:
  - GP practice (73%)
  - Health visitors (68%)
  - Midwife (63%)
12. This was followed by services for children, namely:
  - Pre-school playgroup (47%)
  - Nursery in a school (36%)
  - Children's Library service (36%)
  - Toddler Group (35%)

- Family member (35%)
  - Family Centre (34%)
13. 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)
  14. 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)
  15. The following scores show that these services tended to be very highly rated, but those providing a child-centred service were considered more child-friendly than health services.

	% Ever used	Mean score * - usefulness	Mean score* - child-friendly	
GP practice	73%	4.1	3.8	} Health services
Health visitors	68%	4.2	4.3	
Midwife	63%	4.5	4.4	
Pre-school playgroup	47%	4.8	4.9	} Child-centred services
Nursery in a school	36%	4.8	4.8	
Children's Library Service	36%	4.5	4.6	
Toddler group	35%	4.6	4.7	
Family member	35%	4.8	4.7	
Family Centre	34%	4.6	4.8	

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

16. Comparing the mean scores for usefulness and child-friendliness for these services, it can be seen that the GP practice is viewed as more 'useful' than it is 'child friendly'.
17. Reasons given for these perceived shortcomings included being 'not helpful', 'not available', 'don't listen', 'no play things', 'patronising' and 'no nappy changing facilities'. (See tables 5 & 7 in main report). These were reflected in findings in the focus group.
18. The most helpful service cited by parents for themselves from the list shown was pre-school playgroup (20%) and GP practice (10%). (See table 9 in main report)
19. The most helpful service for the child was again said to be pre-school playgroup (25%), with nursery in a school at 13%, and GP practice at 8%. (See table 10 in main report)
20. Parents suggested that different times of events would help them to use services more often, followed by childcare, although 'someone to go with' was more important to younger than older respondents. (See table 11 in main report)
21. Asked what one thing would make services even better proved difficult for many to answer spontaneously, but those who did cited more information as their top priority, although a great variety of responses were given. (See table 12 in main report)
22. The preference for receiving information tended to be by newsletter or information sheet, although numbers of responses were quite low. (See table 13 in main report)
23. The overwhelming view amongst parents about the positive benefits of the arrival of a Children's Centre in Hawtonville was the opportunity for them and their children to mix with others, followed by the need for more activities for children. (See table 14 in main report) This was endorsed by the focus group findings.
24. Any concerns focused on the potential for problems with any new building, such as vandalism. (There is no new building planned for Hawtonville; new services will be developed within existing buildings).

25. Asked what 3 things Hawtonville needs to make it better for parents with young children, the most frequently suggested ideas focused on play and leisure activities for all children, including older ones, indicative of the concerns of respondents who feel that the lack of facilities for older children impacts on their younger children. A meeting place, especially for mums, a GP/health centre on the estate, and general improvements to the area were the next most frequent requests. (See table 16)

#### The Focus Group

26. Ten parents were subsequently selected at random from the 34 willing parents/carers for the focus group, of whom 8 took part.
27. Respondents, most of whom had more than one child and had lived in the area for some time, carried out a mapping of services and activities during the focus group. This demonstrated a lack of awareness of available services, amongst this fairly representative group.
28. On the whole, the findings reflected the results from the questionnaire, including the call for more information about available services.
29. Most parents were unaware of the existing schemes, such as home-safety equipment, local availability of some education services and the toy library at Bowbridge School.
30. Although this group prefer toddler groups, which enable them to stay with their child and mix with other parents, they thought that very few of these were available in Hawtonville.
31. They were appreciative of the drop-ins on offer from the Family Centre but that existing holiday provision was not always appropriate or adequate, especially for older children.
32. However, their main criticism was aimed at health services, who were felt to be less child-friendly than they could be, citing examples such as poor access, lack of provision of special treatment for mums with young children, no crèche facilities when attending the doctor or midwife sessions, lack of awareness of some support services eg post-natal depression support groups, and generally less than helpful staff as their main issues.
33. Parents gave examples of practical things which can make their lives more difficult eg getting double buggies through doors, nappy changing mats in unsafe places, toilet facilities not being available, times of buses, but most of all the lack of health facilities in Hawtonville itself, although some seemed resigned to the fact that they had to go to the centre of Newark for many services.
34. One mum's account of her trip with three young children to the doctor in Newark town centre epitomises the difficulties described.

*"I had to take my youngest to the doctor again, and I had to take the other two as well, so I had to struggle with 3 kids on the bus, and sit in the waiting room, with one who was getting very agitated and fed up, the other one was running round crying and the little one screaming her head off. I waited nearly ¾ hour, by the time I got done, it was dark and I had to walk home and I didn't get back in till ¼ past 7 at night, walking back from Lombard Street surgery back home. It takes roughly ½ hour to 1 hour, walking with 3 kids. The last bus goes at ½ past 5; you could do with it running till ½ past 6. It's ridiculous!"*

#### Ideas for Improvements

35. The main ideas for improvements or additional services to the area from this group of parents were:
  - More activities for smaller children eg playground just for very small children
  - Something indoors for winter activities for children of all ages

- More play provision for the whole community
- Advice on nutrition & eating problems
- Services such as Baby Massage, Behaviour Management, Smoking Cessation – only known about by one respondent who had been involved with Sure Start elsewhere, but welcomed by others
- Ideally would like antenatal, GP practice, Baby clinic & chemist in Hawtonville although some welcomed the ability to go to see a Health Visitor at any of the three GP practices in town on any day
- Some criticised Healthcare workers for offering a reactive service and not keeping parents informed
- They felt that more information about services and activities should be available at the doctor's surgery, enabling parents to keep up-to-date
- Other ideas for included a video in the surgery waiting room, showing cartoons to amuse attending children and concessions to be made for mothers with young children, to allow them to skip ahead in the queue, particularly if the child was the patient

But overall

- More information available about activities and services, which is up-to-date and age appropriate
36. Some focus group respondents were slightly concerned about the arrival of the Children's Centre, mainly about access for all, sustainability and the potential involvement of Social Services – these fears were discussed in the group and may need further addressing to ensure maximum involvement of parents for the future.

Partners' Views

37. The views of partners largely reflected those expressed by parents both in the questionnaire and the focus group – more play facilities, local healthcare facilities, a focal point for parents - but many highlighted the need for co-operation amongst service providers in the way services are delivered and more effective partnership working as a positive but challenging opportunity. (See section 2 of Partners Questionnaire section, page 21 of main report).

*“The opportunity for coordinated multi-agency working will challenge practice and potentially provide a better effective service for children.”* Youth Offending Team worker

38. There was some expression of the need to ensure that parents were fully onboard with the concept of Children's Centres, to maximise take-up of services, to empower parents and bring perceived benefits to the area.
39. The need was also voiced that the Children's Centre should not be seen as just another project imposed on the area, but that parents and service providers have to work together to maximise the impact.
40. However, it was also clear from a few responses that a degree of greater awareness is needed amongst some of this group, to ensure that all are on board with the plans for the Children's Centre in Hawtonville, although this commitment to communication was recognised by others.

*“We need a commitment of Children's Centre Programme Management to talk to our service and share their plans in an open and constructive manner. This is the first requirement - everything else depends on getting this communication right first.”*

Community worker