

North Leverton Children's Centre Community Consultation – Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire has been given approval to develop 21 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 North Leverton, 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 North Leverton Children's Centre.
4. 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.

Questionnaire completion

5. After an initial meeting with partners to explain the purpose and process of the consultation, self-completion questionnaires gathering their views were completed and returned by 6 service providers.
6. Members of the Children's Centre team conducted interviews with 28 parents and carers, of whom 12 volunteered to take part in the planned focus group, to be held in Leverton School the following week.
7. In fact, more were keen to take part, but in order to use the school premises for the focus group and the crèche, it was planned to take place on the school inset day, which meant that some parents were unable to come along, as no childcare would be available for their older children.
8. This is an indication of the keen interest shown by parents.
9. While only 28 interviews were completed, which is low for statistical purposes, but represents about one quarter of all potential respondents.
10. Some questions were only answered by a small number of respondents, so care must be taken when comparing responses. Percentages have not been shown, as these could be misleading with such low numbers.
11. Figures must therefore be taken as an indication of parents' views, rather than being representative of the whole.
12. All respondents were female and the majority (18) were aged 30 to 39.
13. While 13 respondents said they had children under 5, slightly more (14) had no children of this age; only 2 said they were pregnant at the time.

14. More (25) had children aged between 5 and 16, but no one had children over 16.
15. Levels of employment were high with only 2 respondents saying that no one in the household was working.
16. The average number of adults 18+ in the household was 2.0.
17. All respondents described their ethnic origin as white.
18. 16 of the 28 respondents had known about both Sure Start and the proposed Children's Centre in North Leverton, about which 22 of the 28 had been aware.
19. Asked about local services ever used, the highest mentioned were:

- Pre-school playgroup (25 out of 28)
- GP Practice (24)
- Health Visitor (24)
- Midwife (22)

20. Other services which received a lesser number of mentions included those specifically for children, such as

- Children's Library Service (18)
- Family Members for childcare (16)
- Nursery in a school (12)
- Toddler Group (11)
- Friends for childcare (11)

21. All other services received less than 10 mentions, apart from Antenatal, which received 12 mentions. This is perhaps an indication of the difficulty of accessing antenatal services, especially for subsequent pregnancies.

22. 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 & 5 in main report).

23. The following scores show that these services tended to be very highly rated.

	Ever used	Mean score* - usefulness	Mean score* - child-friendly	
Pre-school playgroup	25	4.7	4.8	<i>Child-centred service</i>
GP practice	24	4.7	4.8	
Health visitors	24	4.9	4.8	<i>Health Services</i>
Midwife	22	4.8	4.4	
Children's Library Service	18	4.4	4.6	<i>Child-centred services</i>
Family Member	16	4.9	4.9	
Antenatal sessions	12	5.0	3.9	
Nursery in a school	12	4.8	4.9	
Toddler group	11	4.3	4.7	
Friends	11	5.0	5.0	

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

24. The child-centred services tended to be considered more or equally 'child-friendly' than 'useful', whereas the Health Services were all more 'useful' than 'child-friendly' except for the GP practice.
25. Reasons given for perceived shortcomings for any of the services included being 'not child-friendly', 'no toys or play area', but responses were very low (See table 6 in main report).
26. The most helpful service cited by parents for themselves from the list shown was Pre-school playgroup by 8 respondents, followed by the GP at 4 mentions and Family Member at 3. (See table 8 in main report)
27. The one most helpful service for the child was again said to be Pre-school playgroup (14), with all other mentions at 2 or less. (See table 9 in main report)
28. Most parents suggested that different times of events would help them to use services more often, followed by 'childcare' and 'someone to go with'. 'Better public transport' was the last choice of these respondents. (See table 10 in main report).
29. The preference for receiving information tended to be by newsletter or information sheet. (See table 11 in main report)
30. Asked what 3 things North Leverton would need to make it better for parents with young children, the most frequently suggested ideas focused on play and leisure activities for all children, including older ones, indicative of the concerns of respondents who feel that the lack of facilities for older children impacts on their younger children.
31. However, the top mention was for more further education courses and advice provision.
32. Only a few respondents mentioned the need for facilities for small children and childcare, but this probably reflects the age of the respondents and their children.
33. The need for more community facilities was also mentioned. (Table 12).

The Focus Group

34. Ten parents were subsequently selected at random from the 12 available for the focus group, of whom 6 took part.
35. Between them, the respondents had 16 children, with only three aged 5 or under. All had lived in the area for some time, although a couple had previously lived in Newark and Retford. They carried out a mapping of services and activities during the focus group. (See Appendix 6 in main report)
36. On the whole, the findings of the group reflected the results from the questionnaire.
37. Most of the mums were in agreement about the usefulness of the pre-school playgroup, which was said to have been established in Leverton for around 30 years, both for the opportunity for socialising for their children, and for themselves.
38. Some said that although they had lived in the area for many years, they felt quite isolated as mums at home with children, and welcomed the opportunity to both get to know other mums and, for some of them, to get involved in village life.

"When I first started bringing my daughter, even though I'd lived in the village a long time, I didn't really know anyone, I'd never really mixed apart from family. To me, it

was a community, I made friends, you get involved from there really. As well as being a benefit for her, it was also a benefit for me. It got me out too.”

39. Although they felt their GP and Health Visitor service was very good, their main concern was the lack of opportunity to attend specific sessions at times which fitted in with the family commitments, to the extent that some essential appointments e.g. Well Woman clinic were being deferred.
40. Many were dependent on family to help with childcare and other support in their lives.
41. This group seemed particularly keen to access training and other course – they spoke highly of the library service in the guidance it could give, and the mobile library service; they welcomed the additional services that should come about via the Children’s Centre.
42. Parents’ ideas for improvements tended to focus on the need for more play facilities for their children, both the younger ones and those outside of the scope of the Children’s Centre, which supported the findings of the questionnaire.
43. They spoke of their wish for better playing fields for their younger children to access (in addition to the one at the school).
44. They claimed that the one playing field in the village they would like to access tends to be dominated by older children, so they don’t take their younger children there.
45. But they felt it was important to resolve some of the problems of vandalism and litter etc so that the young children in the village would be able to play in safety and without fear of perceived intimidation from older ones.
46. The fact that some of the parents have established a committee to look at the provision of facilities for older children is an indication of their concern and bodes well for the future of parental involvement in the Children’s Centre. However, it was also mentioned that the Youth club had to shut through lack of support, so more work will be required to harness enthusiasm to resolve problems in the village and beyond.
47. They envisaged that the Children’s Centre initiative would both help their children to get over the sense of “*being bored*”, especially during the school holidays, while allowing them to develop their sense of independence; it would also provide somewhere for mums to go to meet and talk to other mums; and would provide advice that they were not able to access locally.
48. Some concerns had been expressed about the arrival of the Children’s Centre, which included thoughts about what the building would include, what type of people it would be looking after etc.

“When I first heard about it, I thought – I don’t know how to say this – like it was an Adult’s Centre, for people needing help. I know it will be that as well, but my concern was with it being so close to the school, and strangers coming in, that the children don’t know, that was basically what I was thinking, to start with.”

49. Respondents were reassured about the purpose of the Children’s Centre, and the security that would be in place, both during the construction of the building and once it had opened.

50. It was also pointed out to respondents that the needs of the local area would be the main consideration in the development of any services and activities in the new Children's Centre, in conjunction with existing service providers and local facilities, such as the school.

Partners' Views

51. Although only 6 completed questionnaires were received from Partners, these tended to reflect the views of parents.

52. They spoke about the isolation of many parents in Leverton, the lack of community facilities and low provision of childcare for children in the village and immediate area.

53. They thought the advent of the Children's Centre would bring about a more centralised, coordinated service, which would be accessible to parents locally.

"Bring them into a defined, regular setting that is local and accessible; join up services and extend them."

54. The biggest challenge in developing the Children's Centre was said to be the need to persuade people to use it, and therefore the need to remove any stigma that might exist.

"Getting people to use it and have confidence in it."

55. Meetings involving parents were not thought to occur very often, if at all, but it was said that parents are very involved in the life of the school. However, the concept was welcomed by most, although a couple were dubious.

56. Priorities for developing services tended to support their previous views, so that the main priority was involved in providing support and more services to parents and families locally.

57. Only one respondent mentioned the need for creating the right environment i.e. a quality and inclusive service, as a priority.

58. The need for more play activities for all children was again mentioned, as well as social activities for parents and more facilities for the community at large.

59. Partners also mentioned the need for more cooperation and good communication.

"Good communication between agencies to deliver services that meet LOCAL needs."