



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

# Retford East, West and South Children's Centre Community Consultation – Main Report

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

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## Main Report

### 1 Background to the Research

- In line with the government's current initiative to introduce Sure Start 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 March 2007. A further 25 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, primary 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 child care available for 50 weeks a year, 8am – 6pm offering care integrated with education, for children aged 0-5 years.
- 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 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 develop into 'community centres for children' serving 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.
- Retford East, West and South consultation was 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.

## 2 Aims and Objectives of the consultation

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

Specific objectives are:

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

### 3 Methodology

- The consultation consisted of face-to-face interviews with parents, through completion of a questionnaire; a questionnaire distributed to local service providers and key stakeholders, who were also invited to include a list of services in the area; and a focus group with parents recruited via the questionnaire. Parents at the focus group also completed a mapping exercise of local services.
- The Retford East, West and South ward covered by this consultation includes:
  - The Bracken Lane, Welham Road and London Road areas (Retford East)
  - The Babworth Road area (Retford West)
  - Ordsall and Thrumpton (Retford South)
  - And the town centre.

#### 3.1 Partners' Questionnaire

- Partners, key stakeholders and service providers were informed about the planned consultation in Retford East, West and South at a meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September at the Retford Leisure Centre. The partners' questionnaire was handed out to all who attended to complete at the meeting or return by 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007. In addition it was sent to partners who did not attend the meeting and to pre-school playgroups, day-care providers and registered childminders in the area.
- A mapping exercise was included as part of this questionnaire, asking for details of any services of which they were aware for the under 5s and their parents, in the Retford East, West and South area, with times and contact details. It was used to develop a map of services available in the area to identify any service provision gaps or overlaps and to help identify locations for interviewing parents.
- The opportunity to give contact details was given on the questionnaire so that the team could make contact in the future; most respondents completed this section.

#### 3.2 Parent's Questionnaire

- The initial phase of the consultation with parents consisted of interviews with parents. It was planned to include:
  - Parents/carers with children under 8 years of age at local schools
  - Parents/carers who used the local library or who were seen by Health Visitors in the two weeks prior to the interview day
  - Parents/carers living locally
- Interviews were conducted on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2007. The venues were:
  - Ordsall primary and nursery school
  - Thrumpton primary school
  - St Joseph's primary and nursery school
  - St Swithun's primary and nursery school
  - Bracken Lane school
  - Town centre
  - Leisure centre
  - Library

Additional interviews were conducted in the two weeks prior to the main fieldwork day at:

- Claremont Day Nursery
  - All Aboard Day Nursery
  - With teenager parents using New Roots Housing
  - Tiny Acorns/Kingfisher group at The Well
  - Toddlers Toy Box, New Life Centre
  - West Street Playgroup
  - West Street Pre-school.
- Interviewers were recruited from the Partners' meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September. They included workers from Langold and Prospect Kilton Children's Centres, the district council, Ordsall school governors and PTA, volunteers from other local partner organisations and local churches, along with four professional interviewers. Including the researchers, eighteen interviewers were interviewing on that day for at least part of the day. A briefing session was held on 24<sup>th</sup> September for interviewing volunteers. This familiarised them with the questionnaire, addressed issues such as confidentiality and possible low literacy levels amongst some parents when interviewing, and provided an opportunity to clarify any questions arising.
  - The questionnaire included an incentive prize draw for a gift voucher, and an invitation to take part in the planned focus groups. Contact details were taken where given, with permission for inclusion on the Children's Centre database for future contact, but this sheet was kept separate from the completed questionnaire to preserve confidentiality.

### 3.3 Focus Groups

- Respondents for the focus group were recruited from the contact sheet of the parent's questionnaire, from those who said they would be interested in taking part. Overall, 41% of parents were interested in attending a focus group.
- Parents who had definitely or possibly agreed to come along to the focus groups were contacted by telephone if possible to confirm whether they should do so, although tight timescales, incorrect telephone numbers or lack of a contact phone number sometimes prevented this. Those with children under five were given priority, and we tried to include a good spread of use of the two schools and of residential areas.
- Nottinghamshire County Council provided a free crèche for the children of those parents wishing to use it and a £10 Argos gift voucher was given as a thank-you.
- A letter confirming venue, time details, crèche requirements and incentive was sent to parents beforehand and they were contacted the day before the group to remind them to come.
- Twelve parents agreed to come along to the focus group which was held at the New Life Centre, Retford on 29<sup>th</sup> October between 1.30pm and 3pm. On the day, eight of the recruited parents came, along with three other parents who had heard about the meeting from friends. One participant brought her mother as well, bringing the total to 12.
- A mapping exercise was completed as part of the focus group to gather knowledge about existing services for them and their children in the area.

- During the group, an explanation about Children's Centres was given by a local Sure Start Children's Centre worker. This enabled the group to have a wider understanding of the concept of Children's Centres and ask questions about what might be provided as the discussion progressed.

## 4 Observations on the Samples

### 4.1 Parent's Questionnaire

- 179 interviews were completed with parents/carers at the various interviewing points.
- 161 respondents (90%) were female and 18 (10%) were male.
- 29% of respondents were aged under 29, while 58% were between 30 and 39. 12% were aged over 40.
- 90% of those interviewed had at least one child under the age of 5 in the household. 64% had just one child in this age group, with 21% having two and 4% having three.
- The total number of children aged under five in families interviewed was 215.
- Twelve parents (7%) reported that they were currently expecting a baby.
- 53% of those interviewed had one or more children aged between 5 and 16 years of age. 28% had one child in this age range, 18% had two and 7% had three or more.
- The total number of children aged five or over in families interviewed was 159.
- Six respondents had one or more children aged 16 plus in their household.
- Between them, respondents had 382 children of all ages; the number of families with one child was 51, 80 families had two children, whilst 29 families had three children. Thirteen families had four children, three had five children, one family had six children and one had eleven children in the household. One did not reply to this question.
- Of the 179 interviews completed, the 178 who answered this question had an average number of 2.1 children per household.
- While only 13% of respondents were working full time, 36% were working part time and only 3% described themselves as unemployed. 58% said they were a parent/carer, one person said they were a grandparent.
- 85% were either married or partnered, while 13% described themselves as single.
- 84% of households had two adults aged over 18 living together in the household, while 14% lived in households with only one adult. Just 2% reported having three or more adults in the household. The average was 1.9 people in the household aged 18+.
- 98% of respondents described themselves as white, while 1% were of traveller origin (1% did not answer).
- All respondents' postcodes fell into DN22.

## 4.2 Partners' Questionnaire

- Seventeen completed questionnaires were received from service providers in the Retford East, West and South area, fourteen of which gave contact details.
- As the table below shows, responses were from a range of partners, including those involved in pre-school care, education, local government child-related posts, health, housing and support organisations for families.

**Table 1 – Partners' disciplines**

| Discipline          | No of responses |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Childcare           | 5               |
| Local government    | 3               |
| Education           | 2               |
| Church              | 2               |
| Housing             | 2               |
| PLA <sup>1</sup>    | 1               |
| Health              | 1               |
| Community/voluntary | 1               |
| TOTAL               | 17              |

- The roles of service-providers are shown below.

**Table 2 – Partners' roles**

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Head teacher (x2)                   |
| Registered Childminder              |
| GP                                  |
| Out of school co-ordinator          |
| Pre-school development co-ordinator |
| Toy library manager                 |
| Children's Information Service      |
| Pre-school treasurer (x2)           |
| Nursery manager (x2)                |
| Museum collections officer          |
| Tenancy support worker              |
| Project manager                     |
| Church Minister                     |
| Church Children's leader            |

- The respondents varied in the length of time in their current roles, from one month to 19 years. In total they had 98 years of experience, with an average of six years each.

## 4.3 Focus Group

- Eleven mothers and one grandmother attended this focus group.
- Between the mothers, they had 18 children, 12 of whom were aged five and under. One was also expecting a baby.
- Two had four children, one had two children and eight had one child.

<sup>1</sup> Pre-school Learning Alliance

- Three were single parents.
- The grandmother was very involved in the childcare of her daughter's and son's children.
- They lived in a range of areas around Retford East, West and South, including Ordsall.

## Main Findings

### 5 Parent's Questionnaire

- A total of 179 questionnaires were completed, well in excess of the target of 100. Given that there were around 710 under fives in the area, and 215 under fives lived in the families of respondents, the research reached a respectable 30% of this population.
- Two-thirds (67%) of respondents said they had heard about Sure Start. A quarter (23%) had not heard of it and 9% were not sure.
- A quarter (26%) of respondents were aware of the proposed Children's Centre to be developed in their area.

#### 5.1 Services Ever Used

- All respondents were asked which local services they had ever used, using a Showcard (see Appendix 2). Their responses are shown in Table 3 below, ranked by number of mentions. Responses are shown for all respondents, and for comparison purposes, those who claimed to be aware of Sure Start and by age.
- Shaded cells represent a significant difference from the total for all respondents.
- Care must be taken when numbers responding are low, as these may not typically reflect the views of all local people in this sub-group (eg we only spoke to 16 people aged 40+).
- Health services were most often reported as being used by around nine in ten respondents (91% used GPs, and 87% each used Health Visitors and Midwives). Three-fifths (60%) had used antenatal classes. One in five (22%) had used a breastfeeding group, rising to 27% among those who had heard of Sure Start. A similar proportion had experience of home visits (23%).
- The Children's Library Service was used by another three-fifths (58%), rising slightly to 64% of those who had heard of Sure Start. Toddler groups were used by a similar proportion (57%) although use of toddler groups was less common among younger parents (44% of those aged under 29).
- Family members (55%) were the most commonly used childcare, particularly among younger parents (69% of under 29s used a family member for childcare). 54% used a nursery in school, 52% a pre-school playgroup and 42% used friends (rising to 49% of those aware of Sure Start). A quarter (24%) had used a day nursery while 17% had used a registered childminder (dropping to 4% of younger parents).
- After school clubs were used by 15% and breakfast clubs were used by 7%.
- Job Centres were mentioned by a third (32%).
- 15% had used Speech Therapists, and 13% further education.
- All other services were used by less than 10% of parents overall.

Table 3 – services ever used

| Service                        | % ever used service (N = 179) | % Sure Start-aware using service (N=120) | Age      |              |           |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------|--------------|-----------|
|                                |                               |  | <29 N=52 | 30-39 N =104 | 40+ N =23 |
|                                | %                             | %  | %        | %            | %         |
| GP Practice                    | 91                            | 90                                       | 90       | 91           | 91        |
| Health Visitors                | 87                            | 91                                       | 81       | 91           | 83        |
| Midwife                        | 87                            | 88                                       | 90       | 87           | 78        |
| Antenatal sessions             | 60                            | 63                                       | 52       | 64           | 57        |
| Children's Library Service     | 58                            | 64                                       | 56       | 59           | 61        |
| Toddler group                  | 57                            | 61                                       | 44       | 62           | 65        |
| Family member                  | 55                            | 57                                       | 69       | 51           | 43        |
| Nursery in a school            | 54                            | 51                                       | 54       | 54           | 57        |
| Pre-school playgroup           | 52                            | 49                                       | 44       | 55           | 57        |
| Friends                        | 42                            | 49                                       | 46       | 42           | 30        |
| Job Centres                    | 32                            | 35                                       | 40       | 28           | 35        |
| Day nursery                    | 24                            | 26                                       | 27       | 23           | 22        |
| Home visits                    | 23                            | 27                                       | 27       | 22           | 22        |
| Breast feeding group           | 22                            | 27                                       | 15       | 24           | 26        |
| Registered childminder         | 17                            | 20                                       | 4        | 21           | 30        |
| After school club              | 15                            | 13                                       | 10       | 16           | 17        |
| Speech therapists              | 15                            | 16                                       | 10       | 19           | 9         |
| Further education              | 13                            | 13                                       | 10       | 13           | 17        |
| Toy library                    | 9                             | 8  | 6        | 10           | 13        |
| Story time sessions            | 9                             | 13                                       | 8        | 10           | 9         |
| Crèche                         | 9                             | 10                                       | 4        | 13           | 4         |
| Breakfast club                 | 7                             | 8  | 4        | 8            | 13        |
| Home safety equipment          | 7                             | 7  | 6        | 7            | 9         |
| Parenting advice and guidance  | 7                             | 8  | 6        | 9            | 4         |
| Independent school             | 7                             | 7  | 4        | 6            | 17        |
| Dietician/nutritionist         | 6                             | 8  | 8        | 3            | 13        |
| Children's Information Service | 6                             | 8  | 6        | 7            | 0         |
| Homestart                      | 4                             | 6  | 2        | 5            | 4         |
| Family Centre                  | 3                             | 3  | 4        | 2            | 4         |
| Welfare rights sessions        | 0                             | 0  | 0        | 0            | 0         |
| Don't Know/No response         | 0                             | 0  | 0        | 0            | 0         |

Shaded cells represent a significant difference from the total for all respondents.

## 5.2 Usefulness of Services

- Respondents were then asked how useful they had found each of the services they had used.
- Responses are shown in Table 4 for each of the services mentioned, listed by average score.

**Table 4 – usefulness of service**

| Service                        | Numbers using service | Very useful | Quite useful | Not useful/not at all useful | Average score* |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|
|                                |                       | %           | %            | %                            |                |
| Family member                  | 99                    | 89          | 6            | 0                            | 4.8            |
| Nursery in a school            | 97                    | 85          | 10           | 0                            | 4.8            |
| Friends                        | 75                    | 84          | 8            | 0                            | 4.8            |
| Crèche                         | 16                    | 75          | 25           | 0                            | 4.8            |
| Breakfast club                 | 13                    | 77          | 23           | 0                            | 4.8            |
| Day nursery                    | 43                    | 84          | 7            | 2                            | 4.7            |
| After school club              | 26                    | 65          | 35           | 0                            | 4.7            |
| Toddler group                  | 102                   | 69          | 21           | 1                            | 4.6            |
| Registered childminder         | 31                    | 74          | 10           | 0                            | 4.6            |
| Independent school             | 12                    | 58          | 42           | 0                            | 4.6            |
| Midwife                        | 155                   | 70          | 15           | 4                            | 4.5            |
| Pre-school playgroup           | 93                    | 70          | 16           | 2                            | 4.5            |
| Toy library                    | 16                    | 56          | 25           | 0                            | 4.5            |
| GP Practice                    | 163                   | 59          | 23           | 4                            | 4.4            |
| Children's Library Service     | 104                   | 55          | 31           | 2                            | 4.4            |
| Speech therapists              | 27                    | 56          | 30           | 4                            | 4.4            |
| Further education              | 23                    | 57          | 30           | 0                            | 4.4            |
| Story time sessions            | 16                    | 56          | 25           | 0                            | 4.4            |
| Dietician/nutritionist         | 10                    | 50          | 20           | 0                            | 4.2            |
| Family Centre                  | 5                     | 80          | 0            | 20                           | 4.2            |
| Health Visitors                | 156                   | 51          | 18           | 11                           | 4.1            |
| Home visits                    | 42                    | 52          | 19           | 10                           | 4.1            |
| Breast feeding group           | 39                    | 54          | 15           | 15                           | 4.1            |
| Children's Information Service | 10                    | 40          | 30           | 0                            | 4.1            |
| Parenting advice and guidance  | 13                    | 38          | 38           | 15                           | 4.0            |
| Home safety equipment          | 12                    | 58          | 8            | 16                           | 4.0            |
| Antenatal sessions             | 107                   | 44          | 20           | 11                           | 3.9            |
| Homestart                      | 7                     | 29          | 29           | 14                           | 3.8            |
| Job Centres                    | 58                    | 16          | 22           | 28                           | 3.2            |

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

- The average (mean) score indicates the level of usefulness found by respondents. The closeness to 5.0 indicates the level of satisfaction. However, care must be taken where numbers using the service are low, as resulting percentages are not necessarily representative of the views of all. We have therefore commented only on services used by ten or more respondents, and on sub-groups eg those aged 30-39, where 50 or more respondents overall have used the service and where the sub-group comprises 10 or more respondents.

- Amongst those services used by ten or more respondents, the five most useful (all scoring 4.8) were:
  - Family member
  - Nursery in a school
  - Friends
  - Crèche
  - Breakfast club
- Day nursery and after school club were all also rated as very useful, each scoring 4.7.
- The toddler group, registered childminder and independent school all scored 4.6 overall. The toddler group was rated more favourably overall by younger parents (87% thought it was vary useful compared with 69% overall).
- The Midwife, pre-school playgroup and toy library were all rated at 4.5.
- Whilst the Health Visitor was rated as quite useful overall, single parents rated them as more useful (4.4) than did their married or partnered counterparts (4.0).
- Whilst still rated as useful overall, lowest scoring on usefulness were Job Centres (3.2) and antenatal sessions (3.9).
- Where base sizes were sufficiently large to comment on sub-group differences, no other significant differences by sub-group were found.

### 5.3 Reasons given for services mentioned as being not useful

- If respondents rated any service as not useful or not very useful (codes 1 or 2) they were asked why this was. The response to this question was low (50 people responded in total), reflecting the generally high level of satisfaction with available services.
- The Health Visitor service received the most mentions, but this should be considered in the context of this being one of the most commonly used services.

**Table 5 – reasons why service not useful (where more than two mentions)**

| Type of comment   | Number of comments* |
|---|---------------------|
| Health visitor poor/not needed/unreliable                     | 9                   |
| Poor information/advice                                       | 7                   |
| Antenatal poor/not useful                                     | 7                   |
| No benefit/not helpful  | 6                   |
| GP not helpful/not very good/problems with GP                 | 3                   |
| Problems with Midwife   | 3                   |
| Breastfeeding group poor quality/ not enough help and support | 3                   |
| No appointments/waiting too long for appointment              | 2                   |
| Jobcentre no help   | 2                   |
| Other   | 8                   |
| Don't know/No response  | 8                   |

\* Some respondents made more than one comment  
(For full comments see Appendix 5)

- 'Other' comments were single comments about individual services and are not detailed here because they would be unrepresentative of the views of most users.

## 5.4 Child-friendliness of Services

- Respondents were asked how child-friendly they had found each of the services they had used.
- These are listed in Table 6 below by ranking of average score (for services used by 10 or more respondents).

**Table 6 – child-friendliness of service**

| Service                        | Numbers using service | Very child-friendly | Quite child-friendly | Not child-friendly/not at all child-friendly | Average score* |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--|----------------|
|                                |                       | %                   | %                    | %  |                |
| Family member                  | 99                    | 89                  | 6                    | 0  | 4.9            |
| Nursery in a school            | 97                    | 86                  | 9                    | 0  | 4.9            |
| Friends                        | 75                    | 81                  | 12                   | 3  | 4.8            |
| Breakfast club                 | 13                    | 85                  | 15                   | 0  | 4.8            |
| Day nursery                    | 43                    | 86                  | 7                    | 0  | 4.8            |
| Registered childminder         | 31                    | 74                  | 10                   | 0  | 4.8            |
| Crèche                         | 16                    | 69                  | 25                   | 0  | 4.7            |
| After school club              | 26                    | 77                  | 19                   | 0  | 4.7            |
| Pre-school playgroup           | 93                    | 75                  | 13                   | 1  | 4.7            |
| Toddler group                  | 102                   | 72                  | 19                   | 2  | 4.6            |
| Children's Library Service     | 104                   | 62                  | 23                   | 0  | 4.6            |
| Story time sessions            | 16                    | 56                  | 19                   | 0  | 4.6            |
| Independent school             | 12                    | 58                  | 25                   | 0  | 4.5            |
| Midwife                        | 155                   | 59                  | 17                   | 2  | 4.4            |
| Toy library                    | 16                    | 50                  | 31                   | 6  | 4.4            |
| Home visits                    | 42                    | 57                  | 21                   | 4  | 4.4            |
| Speech therapists              | 27                    | 59                  | 19                   | 4  | 4.3            |
| Dietician/nutritionist         | 10                    | 60                  | 10                   | 10   | 4.3            |
| Health Visitors                | 156                   | 60                  | 15                   | 7  | 4.3            |
| GP Practice                    | 163                   | 49                  | 19                   | 5  | 4.2            |
| Family Centre                  | 5                     | 80                  | 0                    | 20   | 4.2            |
| Home safety equipment          | 12                    | 50                  | 25                   | 8  | 4.2            |
| Breast feeding group           | 39                    | 44                  | 26                   | 8  | 4.1            |
| Parenting advice and guidance  | 13                    | 54                  | 23                   | 16   | 4.1            |
| Homestart                      | 7                     | 43                  | 14                   | 14   | 3.9            |
| Antenatal sessions             | 107                   | 33                  | 13                   | 12   | 3.7            |
| Further education              | 23                    | 30                  | 9                    | 13   | 3.6            |
| Children's Information Service | 10                    | 30                  | 30                   | 20   | 3.6            |
| Job Centres                    | 58                    | 9                   | 14                   | 45   | 2.6            |
|                                |                       |                     |                      |  |                |

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

- This time, closeness to 5.0 indicates child-friendliness. Once again, where base numbers are low, they cannot be seen to reflect the views of all parent/carer users. We therefore have not commented where users numbered less than 10.
- Most services we asked about scored 4.0 or above, showing a high level of child-friendliness with these services.
- Services ranked as most child-friendly were family member and nursery in a school (both 4.9) followed closely by friends, breakfast club, day nursery and registered childminder (4.8). Crèche, after school club and pre-school playgroup were all rated quite highly for child-friendliness at 4.7. Younger parents aged under 29 were more likely than others to rate the pre-school as child-friendly; this service scored 5.0 from this group.
- Least child-friendly were Job Centres (2.6), Children’s Information Service and Further Education (both 3.6), although this is to be anticipated as these are services for parents rather than children.
- There were no other significant differences by sub-group.

5.5 Reasons given for services mentioned as being not child friendly

- Where respondents said a service was not very or not at all child-friendly, they were asked why this was.
- 53 respondents commented. The type of comment is shown in Table 7, with most comments relating to not having a play area or toys to amuse children.

**Table 7 – reasons why service not child-friendly**

| Type of comment  | Number of comments |
|--|--------------------|
| No/old/poor/ toys/No play area                                   | 3                  |
| Not appropriate/Not suitable for children/nothing for them to do | 13                 |
| Not helpful/no interest/no patience with child                   | 5                  |
| Long wait for appt/still waiting                                 | 3                  |
| No facilities for children                                       | 5                  |
| No facilities for older siblings                                 | 1                  |
| Other  | 7                  |
| Don't know/No response   | 20                 |

- Other comments were specifically about individual services so are not included here, but are available in Appendix 5.

5.6 Comparisons of usefulness and child-friendliness

- Matching the average scores of respondents’ views of parent and child’s needs gives the results shown in Table 8.
- A plus score in the ‘difference’ column indicates that a service was rated as more useful than child-friendly, while a minus score indicates that a service was rated as more child-friendly than useful.
- Scores with a difference of 0.2 points or more (and rated by ten or more respondents) are shown in bold.

- The following were all rated as more child-friendly than useful: Home visits (-0.3), home safety equipment, Health Visitors, story time sessions, children's library service, pre-school playgroup and registered childminder (all at -0.2 difference).
- Further education was rated as far more useful than child-friendly (0.8 difference), along with Jobcentres (0.6) and Children's Information Service (0.5).
- The GP practice and antenatal sessions were both rated as a little more useful than child-friendly, with a difference of 0.2.

**Table 8 – comparison of parents and child average (mean) scores**

| <b>Service</b>                 | <b>Average score usefulness</b> | <b>Average score child-friendliness</b> | <b>Difference</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Further education              | 4.4                             | 3.6                                     | <b>0.8</b>        |
| Job Centres                    | 3.2                             | 2.6                                     | <b>0.6</b>        |
| Children's Information Service | 4.1                             | 3.6                                     | <b>0.5</b>        |
| GP Practice                    | 4.4                             | 4.2                                     | <b>0.2</b>        |
| Antenatal sessions             | 3.9                             | 3.7                                     | <b>0.2</b>        |
| Crèche                         | 4.8                             | 4.7                                     | 0.1               |
| Independent school             | 4.6                             | 4.5                                     | 0.1               |
| Midwife                        | 4.5                             | 4.4                                     | 0.1               |
| Toy library                    | 4.5                             | 4.4                                     | 0.1               |
| Speech therapists              | 4.4                             | 4.3                                     | 0.1               |
| Friends                        | 4.8                             | 4.8                                     | 0.0               |
| Breakfast club                 | 4.8                             | 4.8                                     | 0.0               |
| After school club              | 4.7                             | 4.7                                     | 0.0               |
| Toddler group                  | 4.6                             | 4.6                                     | 0.0               |
| Breast feeding group           | 4.1                             | 4.1                                     | 0.0               |
| Family member                  | 4.8                             | 4.9                                     | -0.1              |
| Nursery in a school            | 4.8                             | 4.9                                     | -0.1              |
| Day nursery                    | 4.7                             | 4.8                                     | -0.1              |
| Dietician/nutritionist         | 4.2                             | 4.3                                     | -0.1              |
| Parenting advice and guidance  | 4.0                             | 4.1                                     | -0.1              |
| Registered childminder         | 4.6                             | 4.8                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Pre-school playgroup           | 4.5                             | 4.7                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Children's Library Service     | 4.4                             | 4.6                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Story time sessions            | 4.4                             | 4.6                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Health Visitors                | 4.1                             | 4.3                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Home safety equipment          | 4.0                             | 4.2                                     | <b>-0.2</b>       |
| Home visits                    | 4.1                             | 4.4                                     | <b>-0.3</b>       |
| Family Centre                  | 4.2                             | 4.2                                     | 0.0               |
| Homestart                      | 3.8                             | 3.9                                     | -0.1              |

## 5.7 Most helpful service to parent

- Respondents were asked which service they had used was most helpful to them as a parent. Table 9 shows those mentioned in frequency order.
- The most helpful services were a mixture of childcare and healthcare: family member (mentioned by 15%) Health Visitors (mentioned by 13%), Midwife and nursery in a school were rated as most helpful by 12% each. GP practice, toddler group and pre-school playgroup were mentioned as the most helpful service for parents by 8% each.

**Table 9 – single service most helpful to parent – all respondents**

| <b>Service <u>most</u> helpful to parent</b> | <b>% mentions<br/>all<br/>respondents<br/>(N= 179)</b> |
|--|--|
|  | <b>%</b>   |
| Family member                                | 15   |
| Health Visitors                              | 13   |
| Midwife                                      | 12   |
| Nursery in a school                          | 12   |
| GP practice                                  | 8  |
| Toddler group                                | 8  |
| Pre-school playgroup                         | 8  |
| Friends                                      | 5  |
| Day nursery                                  | 4  |
| Registered childminder                       | 4  |
| Children's library service                   | 3  |
| Breastfeeding group                          | 3  |
| Speech therapists                            | 2  |
| Antenatal sessions                           | 2  |
| Home visits                                  | 2  |
| After school club                            | 1  |
| Independent school                           | 1  |
| Parenting advice and guidance                | 1  |
| Crèche                                       | 1  |
| Dietician/nutritionist                       | 1  |
| Home safety equipment                        | 1  |
| Don't know/No response                       | 4  |

- The analysis above is based on all respondents and is therefore biased towards services with high numbers of users, and against more specialist services with fewer users. Therefore another analysis was undertaken to reduce the bias by calculating the percentage of **users for each service** who saw this service as their most helpful service. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 10 below.
- So we had the seven most helpful services in the **all respondent** analysis above:
  - Family member
  - Health visitor
  - Midwife

- Nursery in a school
- GP practice
- Toddler group
- Pre-school playgroup
- Compared with the five most helpful services in the **user** analysis below:
  - Family member
  - Nursery in a school
  - Registered childminder
  - Independent school
  - Day nursery

**Table 10 – single service most helpful to parent – service users**

| <b>Service <u>most</u> helpful to parent</b> | <b>Number of users of service</b> | <b>Number of mentions as <b>most</b> helpful</b> | <b>Percent of users rating most helpful</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|
|  |                                   |  | %   |
| Family member                                | 99                                | 27   | 27  |
| Nursery in a school                          | 97                                | 22   | 23  |
| Registered childminder                       | 31                                | 7  | 23  |
| Independent school                           | 12                                | 2  | 17  |
| Day nursery                                  | 43                                | 7  | 16  |
| Health Visitors                              | 156                               | 24   | 15  |
| Pre-school playgroup                         | 93                                | 14   | 15  |
| Breastfeeding group                          | 39                                | 6  | 15  |
| Speech therapists                            | 27                                | 4  | 15  |
| Parenting advice and guidance                | 13                                | 2  | 15  |
| Midwife                                      | 155                               | 21   | 14  |
| Toddler group                                | 102                               | 14   | 14  |
| Friends                                      | 75                                | 9  | 12  |
| Home visits                                  | 42                                | 4  | 10  |
| Dietician/nutritionist                       | 10                                | 1  | 10  |
| GP practice                                  | 163                               | 15   | 9   |
| After school club                            | 26                                | 2  | 8   |
| Home safety equipment                        | 12                                | 1  | 8   |
| Crèche                                       | 16                                | 1  | 6   |
| Children's library service                   | 104                               | 5  | 5   |
| Antenatal sessions                           | 107                               | 4  | 4   |

- Table 11 below summarises how the position of the perceived parent-helpfulness of the services changes between the two analyses.
- In this case the independent school, registered childminder, parenting advice and guidance, dietician/nutritionist, day nursery and speech therapist all move to a higher position on helpfulness because 15% or more of their users (albeit a small number of respondents in most cases) chose them as the most helpful service. These might therefore, with the exception of the independent school, be considered to be helpful emerging services that are not yet used by a large number of parents.
- GP practice, antenatal sessions, children's library service and Midwife, all traditional services used by a relatively large number of respondents, drop to

lower relative positions. This is an indicator that there is scope for these services to increase their perceived parent-helpfulness amongst users.

**Table 11 – helpfulness of the services for parents – changes in rank position**

|                               | Relative position on helpfulness:<br><b>All Respondents</b> | Relative position on helpfulness:<br><b>Users Only</b> | Change in rank position |
|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| Independent school            | 16  | 4  | 12                      |
| Registered childminder        | 9   | 3  | 6                       |
| Parenting advice and guidance | 16  | 6  | 6                       |
| Dietician/nutritionist        | 19  | 14   | 5                       |
| Day nursery                   | 9   | 5  | 4                       |
| Speech therapists             | 13  | 10   | 3                       |
| Home safety equipment         | 19  | 17   | 2                       |
| Nursery in a school           | 3   | 2  | 1                       |
| Family member                 | 1   | 1  | 0                       |
| Crèche                        | 19  | 19   | 0                       |
| Home visits                   | 13  | 15   | -2                      |
| After school club             | 16  | 18   | -2                      |
| Pre-school playgroup          | 6   | 9  | -3                      |
| Health Visitors               | 2   | 6  | -4                      |
| Breastfeeding group           | 1   | 6  | -5                      |
| Toddler group                 | 6   | 11   | -5                      |
| Friends                       | 8   | 13   | -5                      |
| Midwife                       | 4   | 12   | -8                      |
| Children's library service    | 12  | 20   | -8                      |
| Antenatal sessions            | 13  | 21   | -8                      |
| GP practice                   | 5   | 16   | -11                     |

### 5.8 Most helpful service to your child/children

- Respondents were then asked which service they had used was most helpful to their child. Table 12 shows those mentioned in frequency order.
- Most helpful services for children were nursery in a school, pre-school playgroup, toddler group, family member and Health Visitor; a combination of childcare and healthcare.

**Table 12 – single service most helpful to child – all respondents**

| <b>Service <u>most</u> helpful to child</b> | <b>% mentions<br/>all<br/>respondents<br/>(N= 179)</b> |
|---|--|
|   | <b>%</b>   |
| Nursery in a school                         | 24   |
| Pre-school playgroup                        | 14   |
| Toddler group                               | 13   |
| Family member                               | 11   |
| Health Visitors                             | 8  |
| Day nursery                                 | 6  |
| GP Practice                                 | 6  |
| Children's Library Service                  | 4  |
| Midwife                                     | 3  |
| Speech therapists                           | 2  |
| Friends                                     | 2  |
| After school club                           | 2  |
| Independent school                          | 2  |
| Registered childminder                      | 1  |
| Home Safety Equipment                       | 1  |
| Dietician/nutritionist                      | 1  |
| Breastfeeding group                         | 1  |
| Crèche                                      | 1  |
| Jobcentres                                  | 1  |
| Toy library                                 | 1  |
| Don't know/No response                      | 5  |

- As with services most helpful for parents, we then repeated the analysis to remove the bias created in the usefulness ratings by high numbers of users. This analysis reduces the bias by calculating the percentage of **users for each service** who saw this service as their most helpful service. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 13 below.
- So we had the five most helpful services in the **all respondent** analysis above:
  - Nursery in a school
  - Pre-school playgroup
  - Toddler group
  - Family member
  - Health visitor
- Compared with the five most helpful services in the **user** analysis below:
  - Nursery in a school
  - Independent school
  - Pre-school playgroup
  - Day nursery
  - Toddler group

**Table 13 – single service most helpful to child – service users**

| <b>Service <u>most</u> helpful to child</b> | <b>Number of users of service</b> | <b>Number of mentions as <b>most</b> helpful</b> | <b>Percent of users rating most helpful</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
|   |                                   |  | %   |
| Nursery in a school                         | 97                                | 43   | 44  |
| Independent school                          | 12                                | 4  | 33  |
| Pre-school playgroup                        | 93                                | 25   | 27  |
| Day nursery                                 | 43                                | 11   | 26  |
| Toddler group                               | 102                               | 23   | 23  |
| Dietician/nutritionist                      | 10                                | 2  | 20  |
| Family member                               | 99                                | 19   | 19  |
| Crèche                                      | 16                                | 2  | 13  |
| After school club                           | 26                                | 3  | 12  |
| Speech therapists                           | 27                                | 3  | 11  |
| Health Visitors                             | 156                               | 15   | 10  |
| Home Safety Equipment                       | 12                                | 1  | 8   |
| Children's Library Service                  | 104                               | 7  | 7   |
| Toy library                                 | 16                                | 1  | 6   |
| GP Practice                                 | 163                               | 10   | 6   |
| Friends                                     | 75                                | 4  | 5   |
| Breastfeeding group                         | 39                                | 2  | 5   |
| Midwife                                     | 155                               | 5  | 3   |
| Registered childminder                      | 31                                | 1  | 3   |
| Jobcentres                                  | 58                                | 1  | 2   |

- Table 14 below summarises how the position of the perceived child-helpfulness of the services changes between the two analyses.
- In this case the independent school, dietician/nutritionist and crèche move to a higher position on child-helpfulness because 12% or more of their respective users (albeit a small number of respondents) chose them as the most helpful service for their child. With the exception of the independent school these can be considered to be helpful emerging services that are not yet used by a large number of parents in this area.
- Midwife, GP practice, friends and Health Visitors, all used by a relatively large number of respondents, drop to much lower relative positions. This indicates that there is scope for these services to increase their perceived child-helpfulness amongst users.
- In contrast, the nursery in a school holds its place at number one, showing that their child-helpfulness is valued, regardless of user numbers.

**Table 14 – helpfulness of the services for children – changes in rank position**

|                            | Relative position on helpfulness:<br><b>All Respondents</b> | Relative position on helpfulness:<br><b>Users Only</b> | Change in rank position |
|----------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| Independent school         | 10  | 2  | 8                       |
| Dietician/nutritionist     | 14  | 6  | 8                       |
| Crèche                     | 14  | 8  | 6                       |
| Home Safety Equipment      | 17  | 12   | 5                       |
| After school club          | 12  | 9  | 3                       |
| Toy library                | 17  | 14   | 3                       |
| Day nursery                | 6   | 4  | 2                       |
| Speech therapists          | 12  | 10   | 2                       |
| Nursery in a school        | 1   | 1  | 0                       |
| Pre-school playgroup       | 2   | 3  | -1                      |
| Registered childminder     | 17  | 18   | -1                      |
| Toddler group              | 3   | 5  | -2                      |
| Family member              | 4   | 7  | -3                      |
| Breastfeeding group        | 14  | 17   | -3                      |
| Jobcentres                 | 17  | 20   | -3                      |
| Children's Library Service | 8   | 13   | -5                      |
| Health Visitors            | 5   | 11   | -6                      |
| Friends                    | 10  | 16   | -6                      |
| GP Practice                | 7   | 15   | -8                      |
| Midwife                    | 9   | 18   | -9                      |

### 5.9 Help to use services more often

- A list of suggestions that might help parents to use services more often was shown to respondents (see Showcard 2, Appendix 2). They were asked which of those listed would help them most.
- Table 15 shows responses by the four main residential areas and by all respondents. A third (32%) of all respondents felt that a more local venue would help them use services more often, reflecting the lack of services local to them. A quarter (23%) thought that different times of events would help. 20% thought better public transport would make a difference to them, while 18% thought that childcare was important in helping them to use services more often.
- Other options of better price and someone to go with were felt to be helpful for 16% of all respondents.
- 21% overall thought that none of these would make a difference in helping them use services more.

**Table 15 – Help to use services more often**

| Suggestion                | Total<br>N=179 | Retford<br>East,<br>N=35 | Retford<br>West<br>N=16 | Retford<br>South<br>N=61 | Retford<br>Centre<br>N=35 |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
|                           | %              | %                        | %                       | %                        | %                         |
| More local venue          | 32             | 37                       | 19                      | 28                       | 34                        |
| Different times of events | 23             | 20                       | 19                      | 21                       | 26                        |
| Better public transport   | 20             | 17                       | 6                       | 20                       | 23                        |
| Childcare                 | 18             | 11                       | 13                      | 15                       | 23                        |
| Better price              | 16             | 9                        | 6                       | 23                       | 20                        |
| Someone to go with        | 16             | 20                       | 13                      | 21                       | 11                        |
| None                      | 21             | 23                       | 38                      | 18                       | 26                        |

#### 5.10 Preferences in receiving information

- Respondents were also asked (using Showcard 3) how they would like to receive information about services for themselves and their children. In addition to the preferences for all respondents, Table 16 shows the preferences of each of the three main residential areas.
- For all locations the preferred way of receiving information was via a newsletter (57%), followed by an article in the local paper (39%).
- A flyer/information sheet was third favourite overall (favoured by just over a quarter of parents (28%), and word of mouth from professionals was favoured by 26%. A fifth (22%) thought that an information session or the word of mouth of friends and family would be a good way to receive information.

**Table 16 – receipt of information**

| Suggestion                                       | Total<br>N=179 | Retford<br>East,<br>N=35 | Retford<br>West<br>N=16 | Retford<br>South<br>N=61 | Retford<br>Centre<br>N=35 |
|--|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | %              | %                        | %                       | %                        | %                         |
| Newsletter                                       | 57             | 60                       | 44                      | 59                       | 63                        |
| Article in local paper                           | 39             | 29                       | 28                      | 51                       | 43                        |
| Flyer/information sheet                          | 28             | 23                       | 25                      | 38                       | 26                        |
| Word of mouth (Health Visitor /nursery staff/GP) | 26             | 11                       | 25                      | 23                       | 31                        |
| Information session at nursery/clinic/sure start | 22             | 14                       | 31                      | 16                       | 26                        |
| Word of mouth (friends/family/other parents)     | 22             | 23                       | 19                      | 21                       | 26                        |
| Via email/website                                | 20             | 23                       | 31                      | 15                       | 17                        |
| None   | 1              | 0                        | 0                       | 0                        | 3                         |

## 5.11 Three things Retford East, West and South needs

- When asked what three things Retford East, West and South needs to make it better for parents with young children, respondents came up with a long list of suggestions as shown in Table 17 below. Only those suggestions put forward by more than one parent are included in the list.
- The most frequently suggested ideas focused on play space – an indoor/soft play area (15%), and more outdoor playspace/activities (12%). A further 6% mentioned better/cleaner/playgrounds and parks.
- More childcare was requested by 11%, and organised activities such as mother and baby or parent and toddler groups were requested by 8% overall.
- Requested improvements to parks, leisure facilities, and to facilities for older children, while outside the remit of Children' Centres, indicate the impact of lack of facilities for older children on those with very young children.

**Table 17 – suggestions to make area better for parents with young children**

| Suggestion   | Total<br>N = 179 | Retford<br>East,<br>N= 35 | Retford<br>West<br>N= 16 | Retford<br>South<br>N=61 | Retford<br>Centre<br>N=35 |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | %                | %                         | %                        | %                        | %                         |
| Indoor/Safe/Soft play area                                       | 15               | 14                        | 6                        | 16                       | 20                        |
| Outdoor/more/better play areas/somewhere to play/more activities | 12               | 11                        | 6                        | 16                       | 6                         |
| More child care /registered childminders /nurseries/crèche       | 11               | 9                         | 19                       | 7                        | 11                        |
| Mother & Baby/Toddler Groups/Playgroups/Toddler activities       | 8                | 6                         | 13                       | 7                        | 11                        |
| More/better information  | 7                | 3                         | 13                       | 7                        | 3                         |
| Better/Safer/Cleaner Playground/Park                             | 6                | 6                         | 13                       | 8                        | 0                         |
| Public toilets/baby changing facilities/breast feeding area      | 6                | 3                         | 13                       | 3                        | 11                        |
| Swimming Pool/Leisure Facilities/Sports Facilities               | 5                | 0                         | 19                       | 5                        | 3                         |
| Holiday activities/care for children                             | 5                | 9                         | 6                        | 8                        | 0                         |
| Before and after school activities/clubs                         | 4                | 3                         | 6                        | 8                        | 0                         |
| More/better buses/Better transport                               | 4                | 3                         | 6                        | 5                        | 6                         |
| More support/somewhere for support and advice                    | 4                | 9                         | 0                        | 8                        | 3                         |
| More cheap/affordable facilities/activities                      | 3                | 6                         | 0                        | 2                        | 0                         |
| Place to meet/groups for mums/parents to meet                    | 3                | 6                         | 6                        | 3                        | 3                         |
| Youth club/Activities for older children/teenagers               | 3                | 0                         | 6                        | 0                        | 6                         |
| More/Better facilities for smaller children                      | 2                | 3                         | 6                        | 0                        | 3                         |
| More for kids of all ages  | 2                | 3                         | 0                        | 2                        | 3                         |

|   |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| Funded pre-school places                                | 2  | 0  | 6  | 0  | 3  |
| More shops/better shops                                 | 2  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 9  |
| Sure Start centre/everything on one place               | 2  | 3  | 0  | 2  |    |
| Family entertainment/pub/somewhere to eat with children | 2  | 6  | 0  | 2  | 3  |
| Drop-in sessions/drop-in centre                         | 2  | 0  | 6  | 2  | 0  |
| Clean up drugs/litter/dog mess/youths hanging around    | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 3  |
| Jobs with flexible hours for parents                    | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 3  |
| Pushchair-friendly shops                                | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 3  |
| More/better parking                                     | 1  | 0  | 6  | 2  | 0  |
| Road safety/speed bumps                                 | 1  | 6  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| Cinema  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 3  | 0  |
| Other   | 12 | 14 | 19 | 16 | 14 |
| Don't know/No reply                                     | 21 | 17 | 0  | 23 | 23 |

\* Respondents could make more than one suggestion so totals don't add to 100%

#### 5.12 Thoughts on the arrival of the Children's Centre

- Respondents were asked if they had anything else to say about the Children's Centre, from what they had heard so far.
- A small majority (56%) did not have anything to add but a quarter (23%) expressed enthusiasm about the arrival of the Centre, with comments such as, "good idea", "great", "brilliant", "glad to see it" and "helpful".
- Five percent commented that more publicity was needed.
- Seven percent commented that they had heard nothing, or that more publicity was needed.

## 6 Partners' questionnaire

- Partners' anonymised responses are shown in full at Appendix 6. Any comments made by the author of the report below reflect these responses.

### 6.1 Current problems

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

- Partners identified six key gaps in current for the area, these being:
  - Education and parenting skills support for parents
  - Information about current services
  - Affordable childcare
  - Communication between professionals/joined up services
  - Transport to services
  - Care for children with special needs
- In terms of education for parents, partners would like to see greater availability of structured classes for parents in parenting and basic skills. This might be around weaning, cooking, first aid etc.

*“Structured classes, ie rather than just a toddler’s [group], a variety of teaching sessions ranging from cookery to practical help with having twins and structured groups for toddlers such as Jo Jingles with its specific aims”*

- Partners feel that there is a lack of information available to parents on services which are currently provided, and where to turn to for extra support.

*“Knowing what is available in local area and what agencies are available for support”*

- This is coupled with difficulty in accessing services for those who do not have their own transport. This is felt to be particularly an issue for those who live in the more rural areas surrounding Retford.

*“Transport – getting children to services”*

- Affordable childcare was identified as a gap by some partners. The key issue with childcare appears to be perceived availability of funding for alternative early education to the school nursery, since some partners commented that there is no funding for pre-school places because schools will take children from three years of age<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> There is funding for all children from the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, regardless of whether they go to pre school playgroup, day nursery or school nursery. It is called “Free Entitlement” and covers 5 x 2 hour sessions per week.

*“There is no funded childcare for pre-school children who are in an area where school take children at 3. This means a cost to parents whereas in areas with no nursery have funding”*

*“Splitting the nursery grant between private and LEA sector”*

- Two partners raised the issue of gaps in care for children with special needs, particularly a need for support groups for parents.

## 6.2 Possible Changes

Q2. In what way do you think the advent of the Children’s Centre will change the way services are delivered in Retford East, West and South?

- The partners were mostly positive about the advent of the Children’s Centre, although some were concerned about what changes it will mean for their own service.
- Those who were positive anticipated that one of the key changes will be greater coordination of services, through a central focal point, making services easier for parents to access.

*“Get to parents earlier and intervene/support quicker”*

*“It will make things more accessible to families on their own doorstep. Create a community base”.*

- Some mentioned possible changes to their current ways of working but it was not clear whether they viewed this positively or negatively.

*“Remove antenatal services from GP/healthcare setting”*

*“Some other services will die out but new ones will be created, hopefully more accessibility to support and information”*

- Others had clear concerns that their own service might suffer.

*“Concern that the PVI sector are being squeezed out”*

*“Worrying for our service”*

## 6.3 Biggest Challenge

Q3. What do you think is going to be the biggest challenge locally in developing the Children’s Centre in Retford East, West and South?

- Partners identified four main challenges for developing Children’s Centre services in the area. The most often identified challenge is locating the service in a place where it is accessible to all parents, or finding a way to help parents access the service if it is not immediately local to them.
- 

*“Finding a location that all parents can come to”*

*“Geographical complications in the town’s layout”*

- Other challenges include involving partners and avoiding duplication of services, listening and responding to local needs and keeping parents and partners informed.

*“Sharing information about all services and preventing duplication of services”*

*“Listening to what is really needed. Keeping people updated on progress”*

#### 6.4 Effectiveness of Meetings

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

- There is very little evidence of mechanisms to promote partnership working in the area. Some partners do currently have meetings that involve parents and most are in favour of involving parents more in meetings, although a minority favour information giving to parents over active involvement of parents.

*“Meetings and networks about once a month, the subject is play and childcare related topics. Most participants are parents and very useful to our service.”*

*“If meetings occur I am not aware of them. It is not always possible for parents to attend meetings and also I’m not sure they should as the agenda list for parents and service providers would be huge. Information giving is better.”*

#### 6.5 Partners’ Priorities

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

- Priorities were varied, depending on partners’ disciplines. Key themes were good quality consultation, working together in partnership, and information for parents. Partners also mentioned ensuring sustainability for current and new services.

*“Full meaningful consultation”*

*“Usage of existing groups rather than setting up new ones”*

*“A manned reception/phone that gives out information”*

*“Resources for existing groups.”*

- In terms of services partners would like to see improved, these include joined up working between partners, improved communication and information so that everyone knows about services and gaps can more readily be identified, and transport to venues.

*“Inter-agency communication”*

*“Central link-up of services”*

*“Transport provision”*

## 7 Focus Group

- The discussion guide used in the focus group will be found in Appendix 4. This included areas which reflected the main sections of the parent's questionnaire:
  - Knowledge of services in the area
  - Strengths and weaknesses of current services
  - Gaps in current provision
  - Good things to come from the arrival of the Children's Centre
  - Areas for improvement in the local area
- Focus group respondents were initially invited to undertake a mapping exercise, to gather information about services and activities in the area. This can be seen in Appendix 7. The mapping is based on knowledge of parents and partners. Parents were aware of toddler groups in their immediate area, and occasionally in other areas.

### 7.1 Knowledge of services in the area

- Knowledge of local services was generally low among parents at the focus group. Parents generally knew of one or two local facilities but had no idea of the full range of facilities on offer in the area. For example, this group knew about the Little Acorns group at The Well for parents and babies, but were less likely to know about Kingfishers group at The Well for parents and toddlers.
- Knowledge of local services was primarily through word of mouth from friends or from the Health Visitor. This meant that finding out about services was particularly difficult for first time parents who did not already have a network of local friends who were parents, and who had limited contact with health professionals.

*"I know that there are things out there but with her being only 3½ months old, I don't know what I can take her to. I heard through a friend that there is a group called Tiny Acorns but I don't know what else there is that I can take her to. I could really do with a newsletter or something"*

- One parent had tried hard to find out information for herself. She had been directed to the library but found their information to be out of date and did not know where else to try.

*"I want to start her interacting with other children her own age. I am assured there are groups around Retford but actually getting hold of the information – I was told to go to the library but the library has got this folder but it was so tatty and out of date. Getting that information is an absolute nightmare really"*

- Only one parent had heard of the Children's Information Service. There was also low awareness of Children's Centres in the area. A couple of parents had experience of them or had heard about their services.

- Parents also had limited knowledge of their childcare options in the area. They did not know where to go to get a list of Registered Childminders, and tended to only know of one nursery or pre-school.

*“[We need] information on nursery education and pre-school education – where are the contacts because the only nursery I can think of is West Street?”*

## 7.2 Strengths and weaknesses of current services

- Parents commented that childcare costs and wages bear no relation to each other, so it is not cost-effective for them to work, although some would like to. They quoted the costs of day nurseries at in excess of £30 a day, which they did not have the earning potential to cover. Whilst they were aware of Working Tax Credit, none were sure of how this worked in terms of covering their childcare costs and did not know where to go to find out. One mother who wanted to work also pointed out that her partner earned too much for them to get much Working Tax Credit so she did not think they would receive enough to make it worthwhile for her to work if it would mean paying for childcare. Their solution was for her to work nights while her partner worked days, although she felt this impacted on her time with her young child.

*“My other half, he works through the day and I have to work in the evenings and we are trying to do it so we haven’t got to rely on anyone to look after [son]. But for me to bring in the money I’ve got to work every night and that means I’m not seeing [son]”*

*“You are told about it but nobody seems to know about it. When you ring up everybody says, ‘I’m not really sure’”*

- Another mother had a similar issue with childcare fees to enable her to go to college. The college nursery would not take the child until they were two, and to pay for private nursery was prohibitively expensive for her.

*“£30 a day is just too expensive if you are studying”*

- Another commented that because she was on benefits she would receive help with pre-school costs, but she could not afford to put the additional amount to them to enable her to send her 2½ year old child to pre-school.
- Money was also a big issue when finding things to do with the children. Paying for lots of activities could get very expensive, particularly if public transport costs were factored in as well, making joining in several activities in a week impossible.

*“Try to get two kids active when you are on a budget”*

- Aside from financial issues, parents also had concerns about the facilities for families in the town. Toilet facilities were a particular focus for concerns, with complaints that there are too few and those that there are of a poor standard.

*“There is nowhere where you feel comfortable taking them to the toilet – the standard of the facilities in the town centre [is poor]”*

- Getting pushchairs around the shops was also mentioned as an issue, meaning that some shops were not accessible by parents with pushchairs. The Leisure Centre was also difficult to access with a pushchair because of the heavy doors which do not stay open.

*“Some shops round here I can’t even go in and they [the assistants] look at you”*

- The Leisure Centre was also criticised for signs which discourage pushchairs, and for having nowhere to safely put down a baby whilst getting changed after swimming.

*“There is nowhere to pop your baby that is dry and clean”*

- Public transport was also found not to be parent-friendly by group participants. They explained that it is difficult to get on a bus with a buggy, and bus drivers offer no assistance. This, combined with the costs, put parents off travelling as often as they might.

*“You’ve got to get on the bus to start with. The bus driver just sits there”*

*“And it’s really expensive”*

- On a more positive note, parents generally praised the Midwifery service, particularly post-natally although one commented on the lack of good antenatal classes, saying she felt completely unprepared for the birth of her first child. Views on Health Visitors were more mixed, with negative comments mainly relating to lateness of developmental checks.

*“If I hadn’t had her [midwife] I don’t know how I would have got through it”*

*“Antenatal classes in this area are just non-existent. I didn’t feel prepared and it was my first child.”*

- Mothers commented that little thought seemed to have been given to the times of baby groups such as breastfeeding support. They felt that it was unrealistic to expect a new mum to be able to attend a 9.30 am meeting.

### 7.3 Gaps in current provision

- Those living in Ordsall felt there was a particular gap in services for their area and would like to see services provided locally to them.

*“It would be nice to have something in walking distance, in Ordsall”*

*“You can’t just go somewhere and say, ‘I need support’, you have to have appointments. There is no drop-in centre or anything”*

*“It’s nice with mums and toddlers and things like that to get together and Ordsall is getting bigger and there is just nothing there unless you have got lots of money”*

- Focus group participants would like to see more activities in the afternoon since most occur in the mornings that are not convenient for everyone. Some also asked about activities for older children, which they also felt were lacking.

*“It’s great knowing about stuff for babies but what about older kids. My oldest is sat at home playing PlayStation”*

- Other particular gaps were outside activities for toddlers, a local exercise class with a crèche and also a café, which is baby and toddler friendly.

#### 7.4 Good things to come from the arrival of the Children’s Centre

- Whilst parents were positive about the imminent arrival of a Children’s Centre to their area, they were also a little sceptical that it would happen, and a little disappointed that there was no new build planned for Ordsall.

*“[I need to] see it to believe it. If there can be improvements then fair enough”*

*“I think with the size of Ordsall it is too little too late”*

- Some were also concerned that they had not heard anything about it prior to being involved in the research, which fuelled their scepticism, despite reassurances that this was the first step in the consultation process.

*“I think if the communication was better then I would feel a lot better with it. You need to be able to know what is going on before you can say it is fantastic”*

- On a more positive note, parents were hopeful that the arrival of the Children’s Centre would mean better signposting to current services, more classes for new parents, such as bumps and babes, and drop-in sessions for the Midwife and Health Visitor. They also hoped that transport issues would be tackled to ensure that all parents in the area have access to the new services.

#### 7.5 Priorities for improvement in the local area

- Information is the key priority for most focus group participants on several levels. They want to be kept informed about developments with the Children’s Centre and suggested the team talk at parent and toddler groups to inform parents. They would also like a reliable system of information sharing, perhaps by email or by post. They also thought schools would be a good central point for information. They particularly requested a monthly plan of what is going on in Retford.

*“I would like to know what is on and maybe a month in advance – by post or email”*

*“For me personally email would be fantastic. If I could register to get updated information that would be fantastic”*

- In addition to information, they would like to see more things for parents and toddlers to do, ideally every day, with some afternoon sessions. More and well-publicised drop-ins to see the Midwife and Health Visitor were also thought to be key service improvements.

*“It would be great having something every day of the week and afternoon sessions. Even an evening session up till 6pm”*

*“If on a Monday it was the midwife there, on a Tuesday the Health Visitor, then if I’ve got a bit of a problem I can ask her”*

## 8 Key messages for the future

- The interviews with parents, the focus groups and input from the partners show a high level of agreement about the needs of parents and young children in Retford East, West and South for the future.

These include:

- Better access to up-to-date information about services and activities across the area
  - Parent and baby groups and parent and toddler groups provided locally that are affordable for all.
  - More affordable childcare
  - Better public transport to allow easy access to services
  - Improved access to outdoor play, both free play in parks and organised outdoor activities.
  - An indoor soft play area
  - Education and parenting skills support for parents
  - Better access to health services, particularly to Health Visitors and Midwives outside of GP surgeries
  - The co-ordination of service providers and improved partnership working to deliver services.
- While the consultation necessarily had its limitations, due to lack of time and resource, the results are still felt to be representative of the community; it was always seen as a first conversation to provide a basis with which to build the future Children's Centre services in Retford East, West and South.
  - There is the need to assure parents and partners that the Children's Centre services will be sustainable and that the involvement of all parties is crucial in its success, as well as allowing parents to take ownership of the Children's Centre, to be jointly engaged with professionals in the provision of services for them and their families.
  - This consultation and the planned feedback session on 5<sup>th</sup> December are the starting points from which services for children under 5 and their families will develop. There is every reason to think from responses that parents will become involved, so that the Children's Centre becomes their service, rather than something delivered to them.

## 9 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 Retford East, West and South from parents and partners