

MERTON COUNCIL

Services for children from pregnancy to age 5

Consultation analysis and Phase 2 response

February 2017



www.merton.gov.uk



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Overview

Since July 2016, Merton Early Years Service has carried out two consultations with service users and stakeholders to gain feedback on our proposals for the development of services for children from pregnancy to age 5.

Interested parties were invited to share their views and feedback.

This document provides:

- The summary from the Phase 1 Consultation
- The summary from the Phase 2 Consultation
- Confirmation of the service delivery model from April 2017.

Appendices

1. Local and contextual information
2. Analysis of Phase 1
3. Analysis of Phase 2



Phase 1 Consultation Summary

The consultation '**Services for children from pregnancy to age 5**' Phase 1 commenced on 15 July 2016 and closed on 15 September 2016.

Supporting local and contextual information is provided as Appendix 1.

About the respondents

A total of 428 parents and professionals responded to the consultation. Of the 428 who responded, 89% were parents and 10% were professionals/practitioners, with 1% not providing a response to this question.

About the consultation

The consultation sought views on Merton Council's Proposed Principles for the future delivery of services.

1. To what extent do you agree with the Proposed Principles of the service?

Principle 1 – Providing support at the earliest age

Principle 2 – Providing the right amount of support

Principle 3 – Working together

The results provided emphatic confirmation that our service users and stakeholders are in agreement with the three Proposed Principles.

2. Respondents were asked to state how much or how little they value the type of services accessible via their children's centre.

The percentage of respondents who stated that they 'Valued' or 'Highly Valued' each type of service delivered was high (from 75-94%) for all areas.

A summary of the response to each proposal along with information on the demographics of respondents is provided in Appendix 2.

Phase 2 Consultation Summary

The consultation '*Services for children from pregnancy to age 5*' Phase 2 commenced on 15 November 2016 and closed on 20 January 2017.

About the respondents

In total 157 people responded to the consultation. Of these, 12% were professionals/practitioners and 88% were parents or carers.

About the consultation

Two information sessions were made available, offering the opportunity for respondents to talk through the proposals, ask questions and offer feedback with members of the Early Years Management Team. These sessions did not generate any specific feedback.

Questionnaires were circulated across the borough and were available both in hard copy and electronically.

The consultation sought views on Merton Council's proposed service offer through Children's Centres for the future delivery of services.

A series of statements were given and respondents were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with each proposal or did not know.

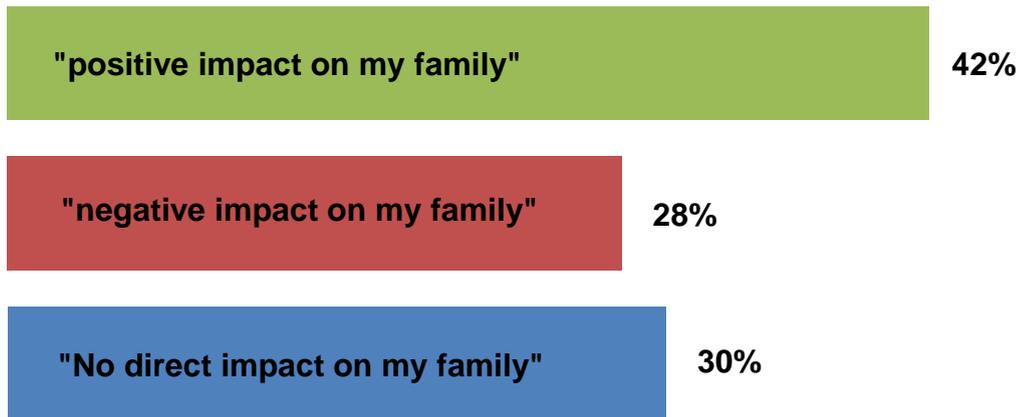
The statements/questions were themed around the following:

- Children Centres – opening times and timetables
- Early learning and child development
- Family and parenting support
- Working with Health
- Providing information
- Volunteering, education and employment
- Parental involvement
- Community groups use of centres
- Advisory Boards

Impact of the proposals Phase 2

Having responded to the series of statements, respondents were asked:

“Please indicate how you feel the proposals contained within the consultation will affect you and your family”



The majority of respondents felt that proposals would have a positive impact on their family, with less than a third of families stating that the proposals would have a negative impact on their family.

A summary of the response to each proposal, along with information on the demographics of respondents is provided in Appendix 3.

Responding to feedback Phase 1

Our Core Principles - Phase 1

The consultation results provided resounding confirmation that our service users and stakeholders were in agreement with the three principles proposed:

- Support at the Earliest Stage,
- The Right Amount of Support for Each Family and
- Working Together.

These principles have been used to underpin our service as we move forward with our new re-shaped model.

This will enable Merton Council to provide opportunities for a good start in life for children, tailor our services to meet individual needs, and focus resources on the children who need it most and their families.

Value of Services to Families – Phase 1

The services which were most 'Valued' or 'Highly Valued' were those which support parents to understand their baby's development and how to support babies to play, develop and learn, along with access to midwifery and health services via a local children's centre.

These priority service areas link to our core principles to Provide Support at The Earliest Stage and Working Together.

We will continue to work closely with our midwifery and health visiting partners to ensure access to health services via the children's centres.

We will also commit to providing more places on courses for new parents to support parents' understanding of their baby's development and promoting nurturing and attachment.

Responding to feedback Phase 2

In summary, the majority of respondents were in agreement with the consultation proposals in Phase 2. However, there was one question that received a comparatively higher number of 'disagree' responses than others. This was:

2.1 Replacing existing Stay and Play sessions with a new programme for all first time parents of babies from 0 – 7 months.

Although the majority of respondents stated that the proposals would have a positive impact on their family, 28% stated that their family would be impacted negatively.

These respondents were provided with the option to give specific feedback to support their response and there was a clear theme arising from the comments provided regarding concern at the reduction in Stay and Play / drop-in sessions available at children's centres, rather than the development of a new programme for parents of babies under 7 months old.

It is evident from the feedback provided that Stay and Play session are highly valued by some parents and there is recognition of the benefit of these sessions to their child's development, as well as valuing the social interactions for themselves as well as their child.

The number of respondents providing feedback regarding Stay and Plays sessions was a small percentage of regular centre users and, as such, this feedback would not prompt revision to the proposed service plans. However, in light of this specific feedback, we have explored possible ways to provide:

- access to drop-in sessions for families experiencing particular issues who would benefit from a service that enables a timely access and response. These will be delivered from various centres across the borough
- a widened age range for the Early Learning Together Toddler programme: up to 3 years (proposal was up to 20 months). This will incorporate aspects of delivery consistent with a Stay and Play session for families meeting specific criteria

These sessions will be in addition to our original proposals and support us to deliver our plans and adhere to our core principles (agreed in Phase 1 of the consultation) **Support at the Earliest Stage, The Right Amount of Support for each Family** and **Working Together**.

We know that there are a number of stay and play groups available across the borough, held in community halls and libraries, and we will work closely with these groups to ensure that we are able to provide up-to-date information to parents on what they can access and when and where they take place. Information can be found on the Merton Family Services Directory website at www.merton.gov.uk/fsd

Next Steps

Having reviewed all responses and considered the feedback provided, we can confirm that we will be moving forward with plans to revise the service as detailed in the consultation, with the addition of the groups/services as above.

There will be a phased approach to the implementation of our new service and changes will begin to come into effect from April 2017. However, it is likely that the proposed programme will not be fully embedded until January 2018.

We will ensure that we work alongside service users and provide regular updates as we begin to embed the changes.

Thank you to those that took time to respond to the consultation.

Appendix 1: Local / Contextual Information

Finances

Alongside the continuous review of the effectiveness and efficiency of services, Merton are this year required to make budget savings.

We have used a process called Target Operating Model (TOM) to aid our service delivery planning and making best use of resources available. The reshaped service which will be delivered from April 2017 will ensure that we are operating within our allocated budget

Link to TOM

Our reshaped service will change the times and weeks of operation of Merton's children's centre buildings as well as changes to the type and range of services that will be delivered.

Our resources will be better used to deliver our core principles, through the new reshaping of our timetable of activities and changing the opening hours for some centres to make sure we are best using our assets and staffing to work directly with families.

By taking this approach we are able to deliver more early help services while at the same time delivering cost effective services.

Statutory Duties

Merton Council has a duty to provide certain services. These are known as our 'Statutory Duties'. For children aged up to 5 years old, these broadly include:



Delivery of early education places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds in partnership with early years and childcare providers and supporting families to access these places



Delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (via the Health Visiting Service)



Supporting families in keeping their children safe, supporting their children's development and wellbeing



Providing information, advice and guidance about services that are available

These duties will continue to be met through our new reshaped model.

The core purpose of children’s centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
- child and family health and life chances.

The Sure Start Children’s Centre Statutory Guidance 2013 states that ‘children’s centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as it is about providing premises in particular geographical areas’.

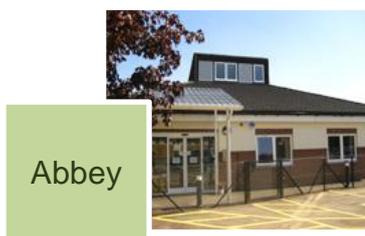
Our new reshaped model moves away from council-run children’s centre services being defined as being delivered from a children’s centre building and move towards a responsive service tailored to need, delivered in a variety of ways, including from families’ homes. By doing this, we will maximise the space available to other Early Years services such as Health Visiting and Midwifery and other community groups.

Local knowledge

We know that children living in deprivation are more likely to experience poor health outcomes and to fall behind their peers academically.

The **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)** is a measure of deprivation used nationally. The index calculates the proportion of children under the age of 16 that live in low income households in a local area. This data can be mapped to very small geographical areas. In Merton, we use this index to support our understanding of needs in the local area.

We know that the demographics of the borough of Merton are changing and newly-released IDACI data (2015) has provided us with further detail on this. Based on this information, we know that our key areas of focus are around the children’s centres below.



We have considered this information within the new and reshaped model and will be seeking to increase the uptake of Early Years services in the areas served by these centres where we have the highest number of families living in deprivation. This will help us to support families in these areas to quickly access appropriate services; the additional session referenced above will prioritise access to families meeting specific criteria.

We also use a range of other data sources, including these services:



Health

Such as information on breastfeeding, healthy weight and hospital admissions



Education

Such as children with SEN and attainment data, showing us how children are progressing at the end of their reception year



Social Care

Such as the number of children and families who are working with children's social care

Types of Early Years services

A range of services for families with children from birth to 1 September after their fifth birthday will continue to be accessed via our children's centres in addition to those that take place in other venues across the borough, such as libraries, leisure centres and community centres. We categorise services offered into one of 2 types as shown below:

Our new reshaped model will deliver, or support the delivery of a range of these 2 types of service as well as work together with other organisations such as health services. Some services will be available to all and some will be accessed through referral from a children's centre worker, health visitor, midwife or Early Years practitioner, for example.

Early Childhood Services (Universal services)

Universal services are often defined as those that are accessible to all families with a child or children under the age of 5 years old. Merton's children's centres offer a good range of universal health services, such as Midwifery, Health Visiting and Early Education. Our new reshaped service will deliver one universal group for all first time parents with a baby aged 0 – 7 months. This enables us to deliver on our core principles: Providing Support at the Earliest Age and Providing the Right Amount of Support.

Our service offer for parents of new babies will offer *all* first time parents a chance to attend a programme that supports them to understand their babies development, promotes nurturing and attachment and provides an opportunity to meet other parents

and find out about what support and services are available in their local community before their child reaches 7 months old.

We will continue to offer the existing play and stay sessions linked to child health clinics and we also know that there are many other stay and play sessions / groups at other venues across the borough run by other groups or organisations. We would like to support parents and carers to find these sessions close to their homes which they can access.

Therefore, we commit to ensuring that our Family Services Directory provides current and comprehensive information to enable parents and carers to easily find out about other local services. The Family Services Directory can be accessed at www.merton.gov.uk/fsd

Early Help Services (By referral)

Early help services (by referral) are services that are accessible to families who would benefit from a service to support them around a specific area of need, such as speech and language support, or help for parents to promote positive behaviour.

These types of service can include services for families who have a child with special educational needs or disabilities.

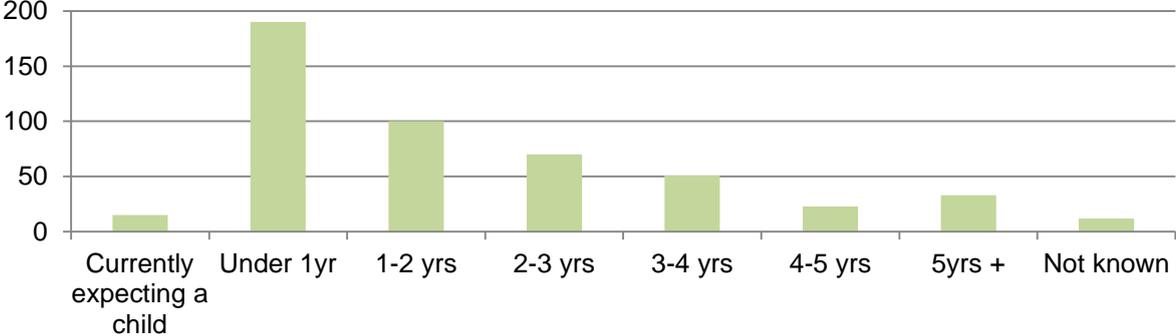
The purpose of early help services are to ensure that support is put in place at the earliest stage possible, reducing the escalation of needs and preventing families requiring the support of specialist, high cost services later down the line.

Our new reshaped model will continue to provide a range of early help services.

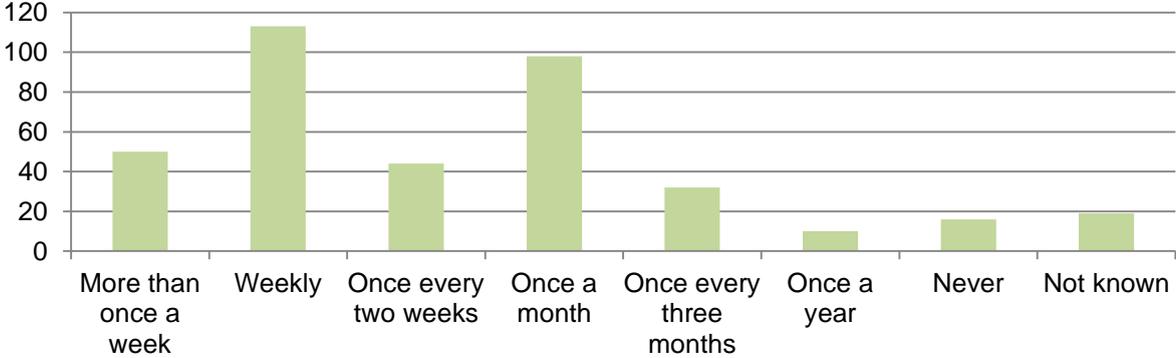
Appendix 2: Phase 1 Consultation Response Data

The vast majority of parents who responded had children under three years of age and almost half of all parents who responded use children’s centre services at least once every two weeks.

Age of children of respondents

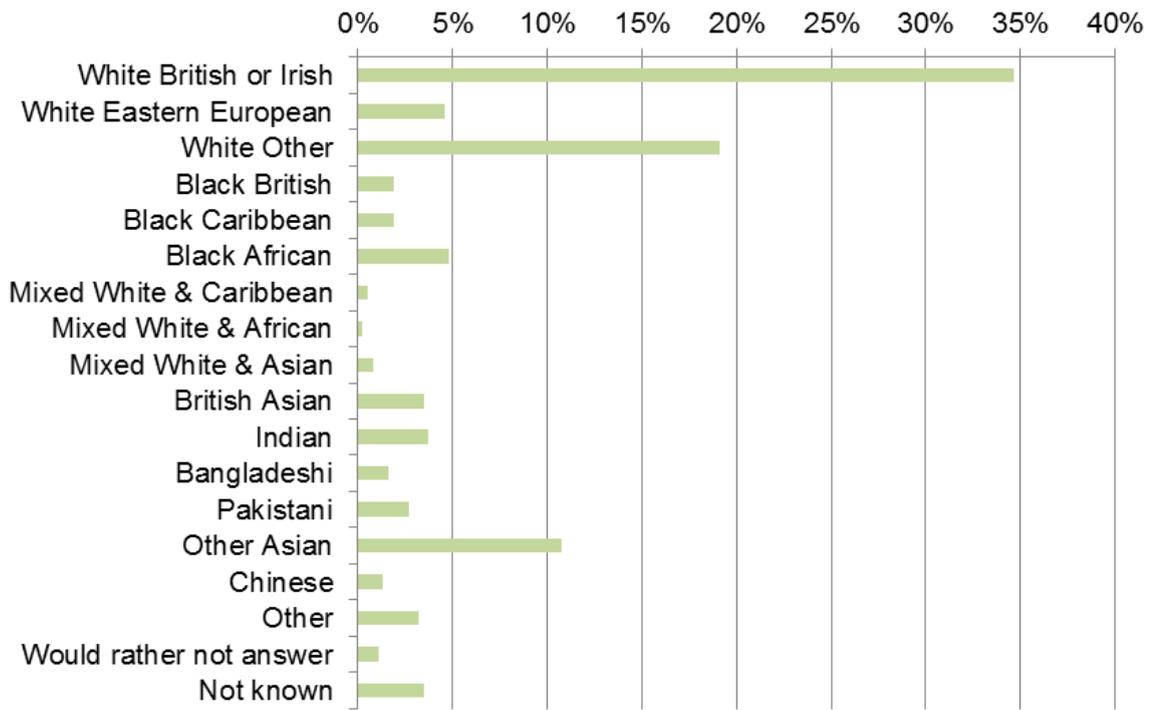


How often do you use children's centres?

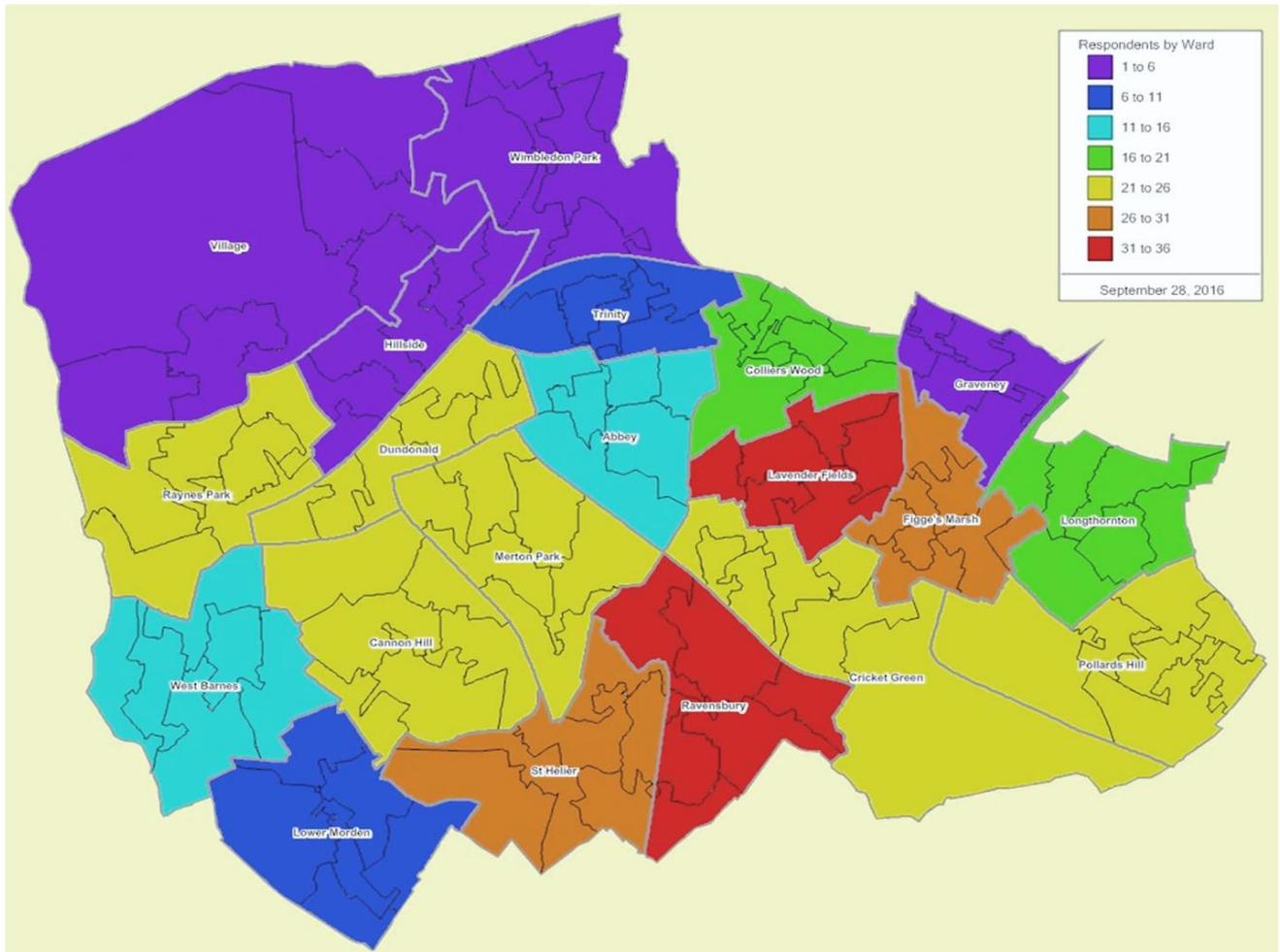


Respondents came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and geographical areas of the borough, as shown overleaf.

Ethnicity of respondents



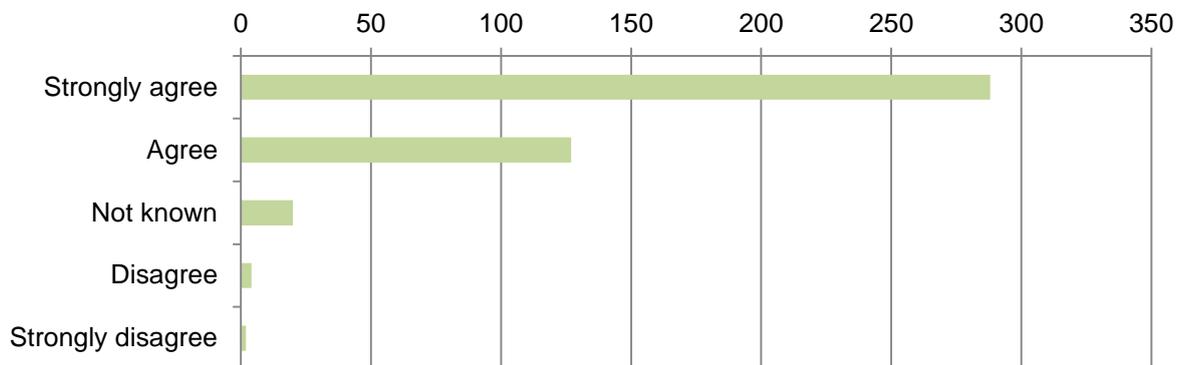
The map below shows the number of respondents by ward for the 76 % of respondents who provided a postcode



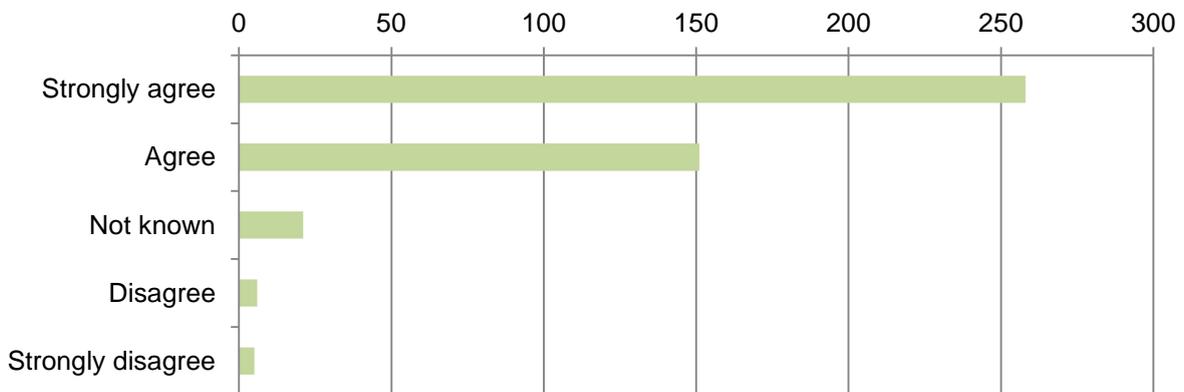
The consultation sought views on Merton Council's Proposed Principles for the future delivery of services.

1. To what extent do you agree with the Proposed Principles of the service?

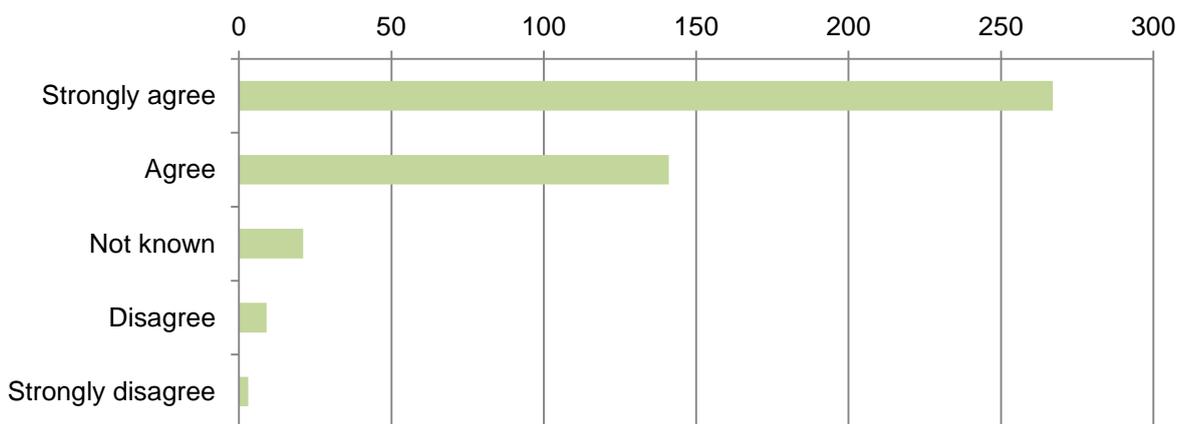
Principle 1 - Providing support at the earliest age



Principle 2 - Providing the right amount of support



Principle 3 - Working together



The results provide emphatic confirmation that our service users and stakeholders are in agreement with the three Proposed Principles.

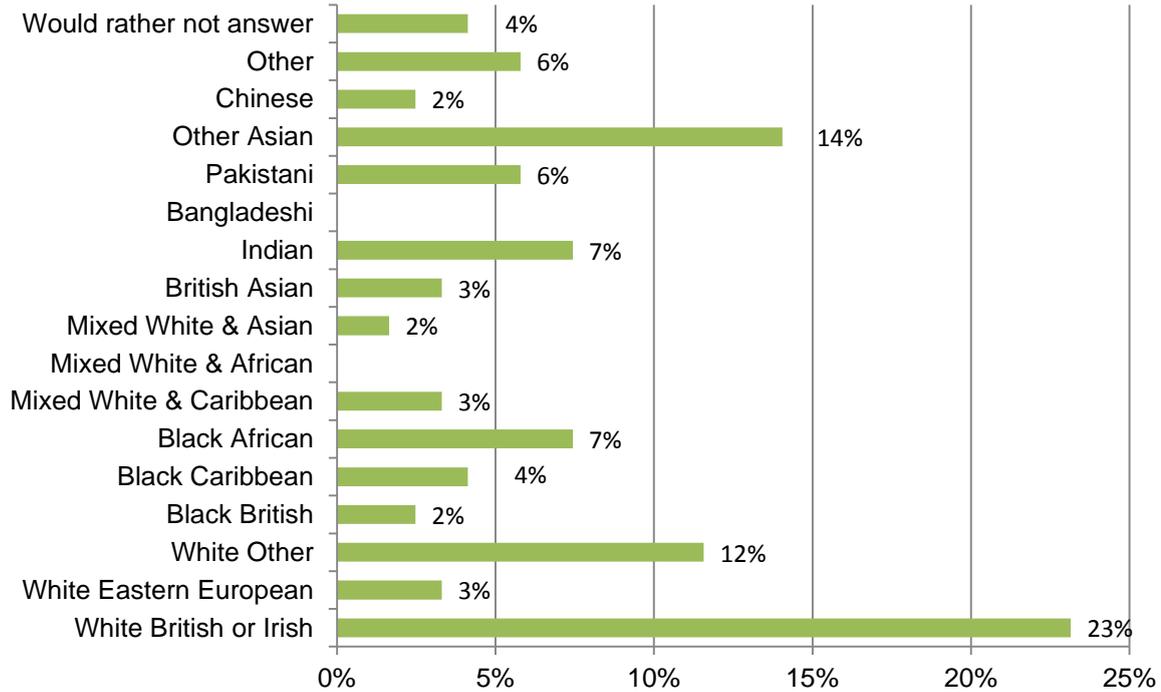
2. Respondents were asked to state how much or how little they value the type of services accessible via their children's centre.

The list below shows the percentage of respondents who stated that they 'Valued' or 'Highly Valued' each aspect of services.

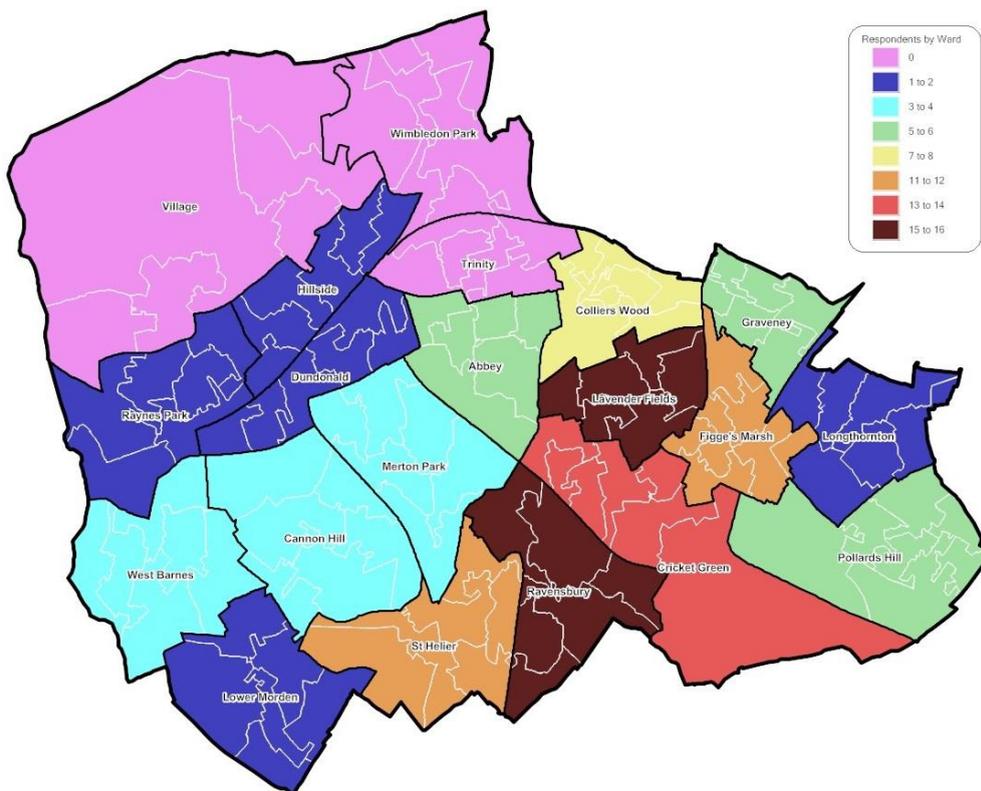
94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services that support babies to play, develop and learn
94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for new parents to understand their baby's developmental needs
93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to Health Visiting services
88%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to Midwifery
86%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for parents to understand their pre-school child's development and how to promote positive behaviour
84%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services that support children to be ready for school
82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-to-one family support and home visiting
82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support to develop children's speech and language
75%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for parents of children with additional needs, disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Appendix 3: Phase 2 Consultation Response Data

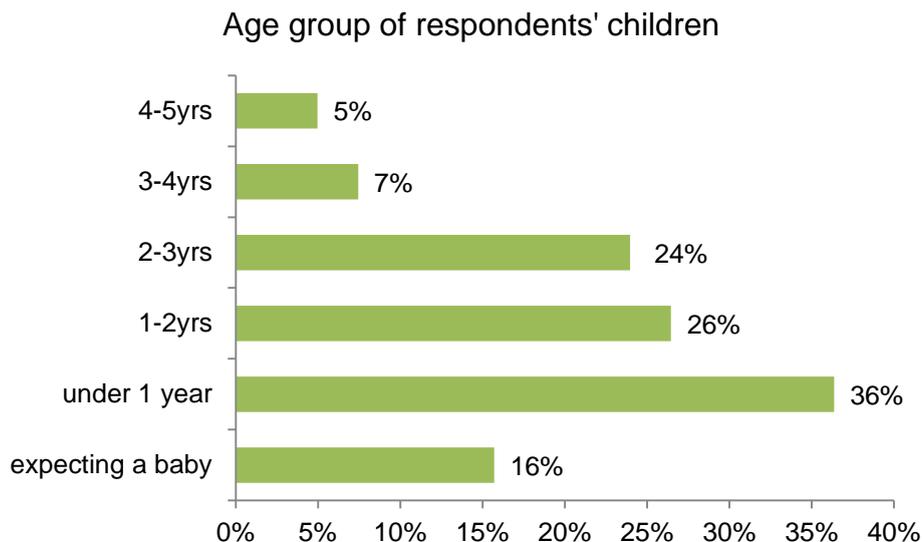
Respondents came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and geographical areas of the borough.



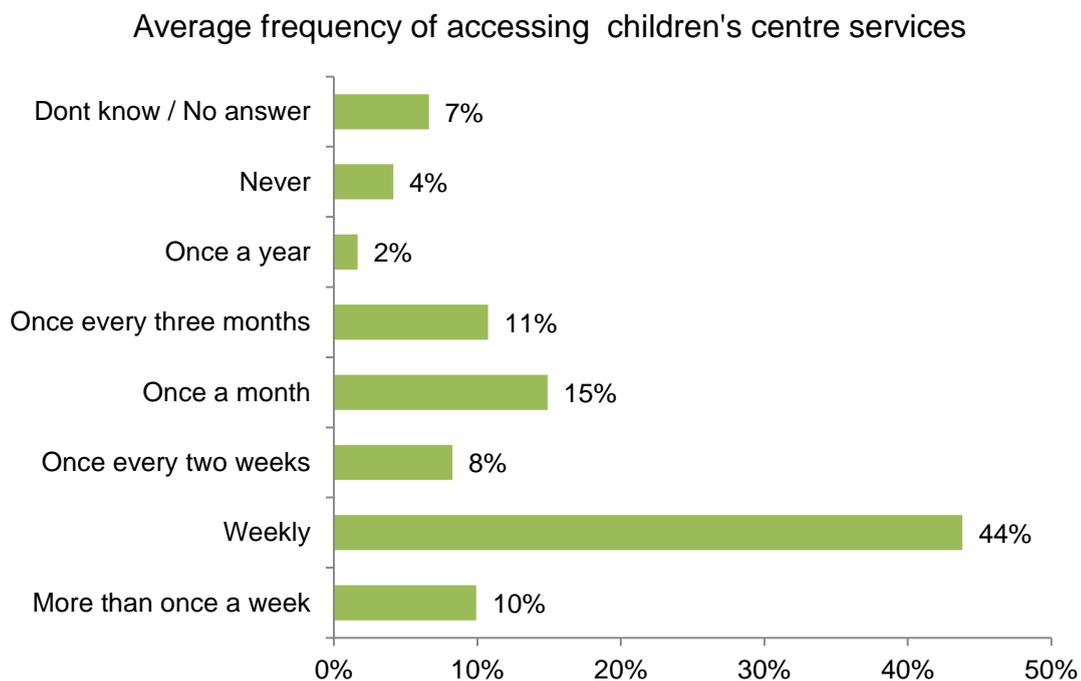
Respondents by Merton ward



More than half of respondents have a child under the age of 2.



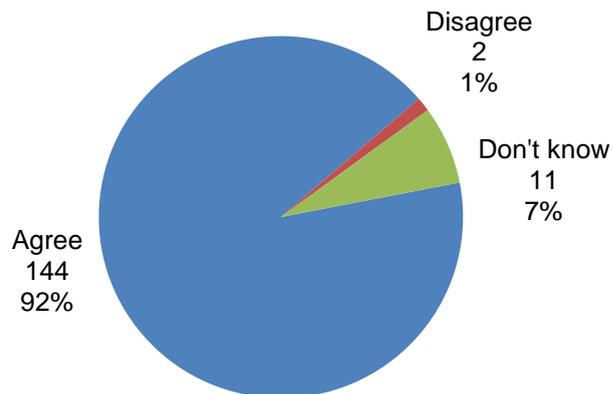
More than 60% of respondents access children's centre services at least once every 2 weeks.



Response to proposals

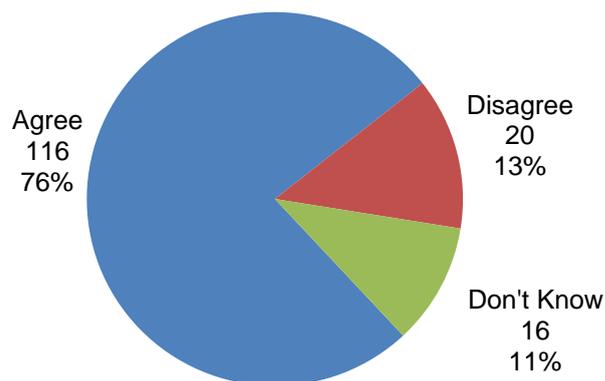
The following pages provide details (number, percentage) of the responses to each proposal in the consultation.

Proposal 1.1 Maintaining a network of children's centres



The vast majority of respondents agree that the network of children's centres with specified types of sessions and services should be maintained.

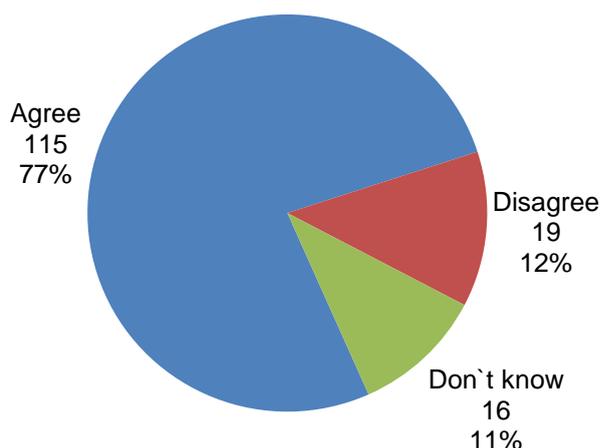
Proposal 1.2 Producing a single borough-wide children's centre timetable



Most respondents agree with the proposal to produce one annual timetable for the whole borough so that parents can find out about services at any centre easily. This will also help professionals to plan more efficiently and effectively

Proposal 1.3

Fixing the opening hours at each children's centre

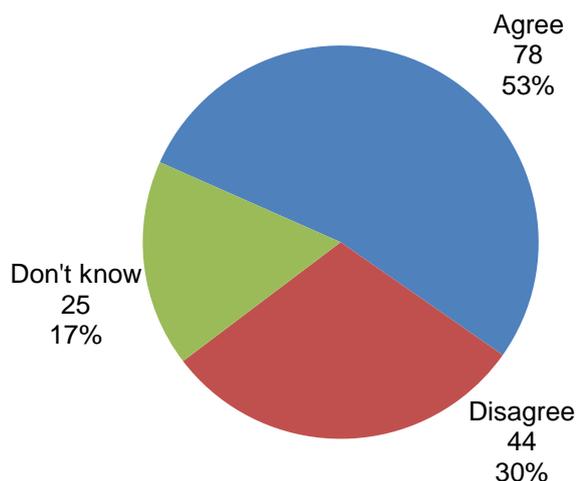


Most respondents agree to fixed opening hours at Merton's children's centres, including ensuring centres are open for delivery of services such as Midwifery, Health Visiting and community groups even when no council-run services are being delivered.

NB Currently the children's centres close for staff training and building works at various points across the year. We have decided to schedule these closure weeks and fix them across the borough, so that courses and programmes can continue without disruption and that parents are aware well in advance of closures. The service will operate for 48 weeks of the year with 4 closure weeks. One in April, the last week of August and the first week of September and one week over the December/January holiday period.

Proposal 2.1

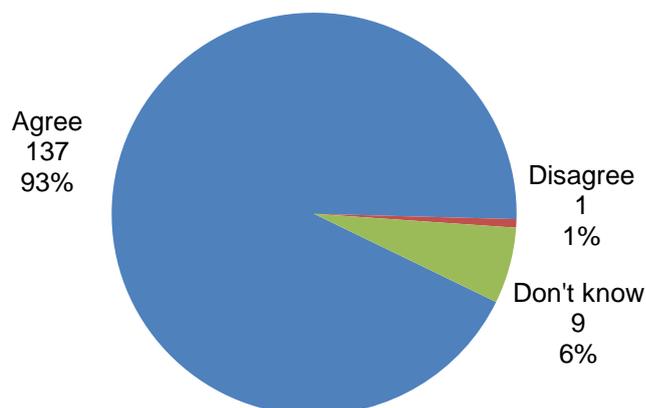
Providing a universal programme for all first time new parents of babies under 7 months, replacing existing Stay and Play sessions.



Just over half of respondents agree with the proposal to replace most stay and play sessions with a programme for all first time parents with a child aged under 7 months available across the network of children's centres. It is proposed that this service is available to all first time parents with pre-booking. Just under a third of respondents disagreed with this proposal.

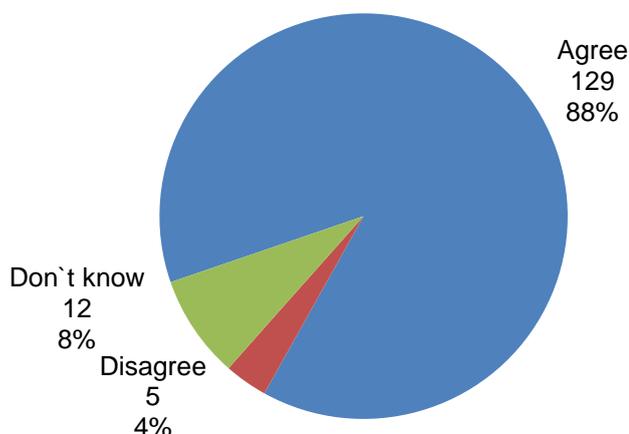
NB In light of specific feedback on this question we have explored possible ways to provide access to drop in sessions for families experiencing particular issues who would benefit from a service that enables a timely access and response . These will be delivered from various centres across the borough. See page 8 for further details about this.

Proposal 2.2
Continuing to provide 8 Health and Play sessions



The vast majority of respondents agree with the proposal to continue to provide Health and Play sessions for families who are accessing Child Health Clinics at centres.

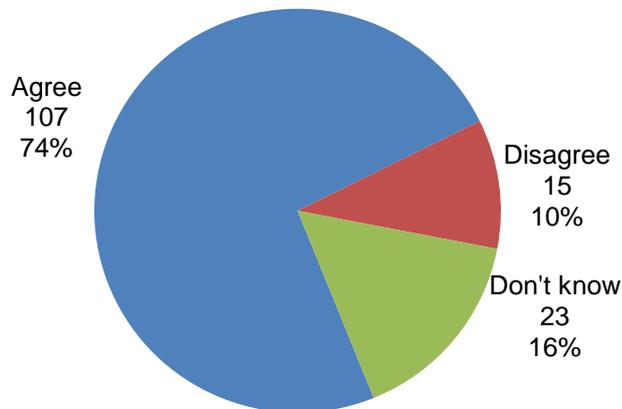
Proposal 2.3
Continuing to provide 2 Stay and Play sessions for young parents and their children



Most respondents agree with the proposal to continue to provide Young Parents Stay and Play in 2 children's centres. These sessions are open to parents under the age of 21 with a child under the age of 5 years.

Proposal 3.2

Continuing to deliver the Home PLAY programme, lowering the age range to children aged 8 to 20 months and including a group session

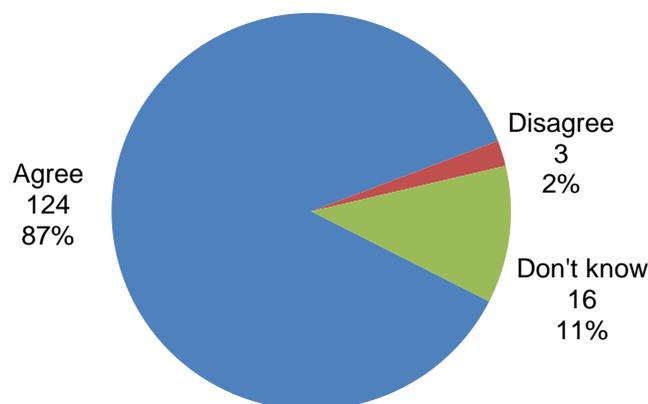


Most respondents agree that the home-based PLAY programme should be continued. This is delivered in the family home supporting parents with practical tips of how to engage their child in age-appropriate play and how to provide a stimulating home-learning environment. The proposal includes a new group session and lowering the eligibility age range.

NB We have taken the decision to further extend the age range for this programme, to allow for more families to benefit. The age groups will be split allowing sessions to be tailored to children's ages and stages of development. See page 8 for further details about this.

Proposal 3.3

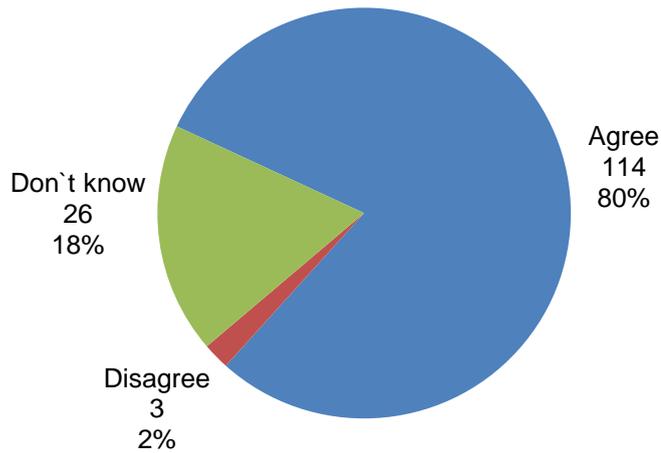
Increasing the number of Early Learning Together programmes for children aged 20 months to 3 years



Most respondents agree with the proposal to increase the number of Early Learning Together (nursery and school readiness) programmes from 3 to 4 per term for referred families with children aged 20 months to 3 years.

Proposal 3.4

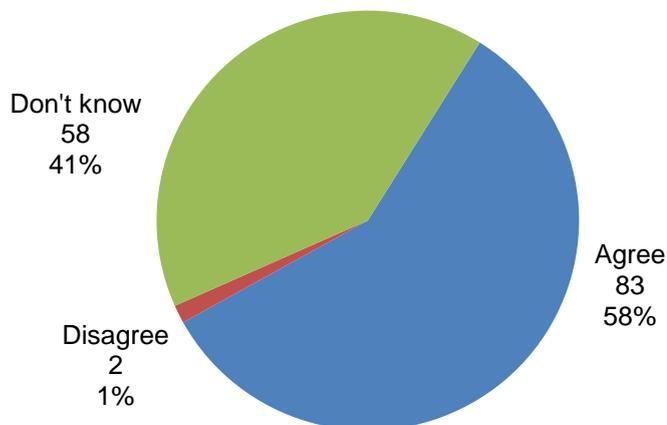
Increasing the number of Talking Together programmes



Most respondents agree with the proposal to increase the number of Talking Together (speech and language) programmes from 3 to 4 per term. This service is accessed via referral.

Proposal 3.5

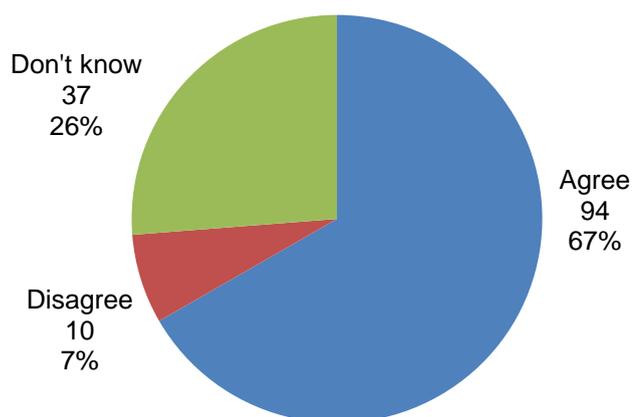
No change to the Portage Support Groups



This is agreed to by over half of respondents, though 2/5^{ths} of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal. The groups are for children with additional needs and their families.

Proposal 3.6

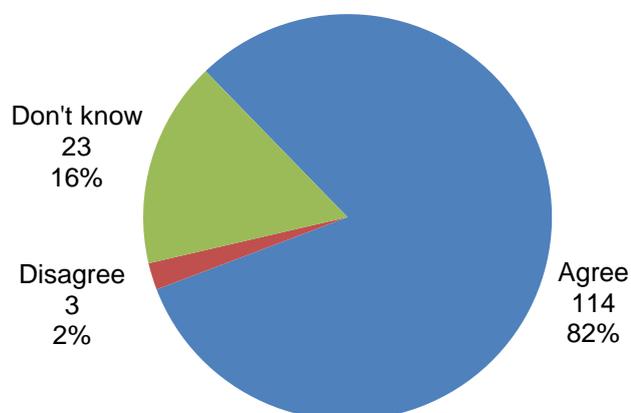
No change to the Social Communication Groups and the addition of childcare support to allow for ease of access to the sessions



Most respondents agree to no change to Social Communication Groups which support children to interact with their parents/carers and with other families. The groups are accessed via referral.

Proposal 4

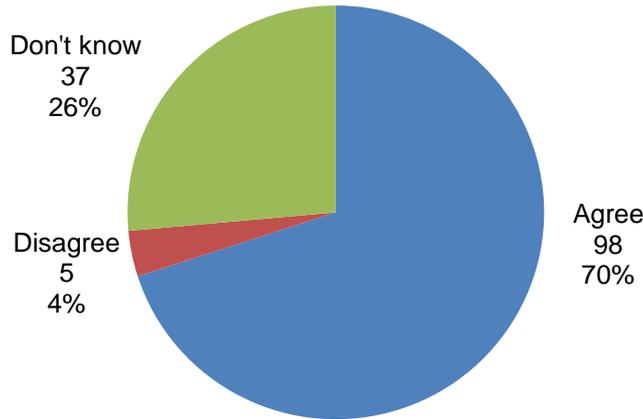
No change to one-to-one family support work



Most respondents agreed to continue to provide access to a Family Support Worker to families requiring additional support who meet the criteria for Early Help services. The worker co-ordinates services and support with a view to improve the families' outcomes. The proposal includes increasing the number of specialist SEND support staff.

Proposals 5.1 and 5.2

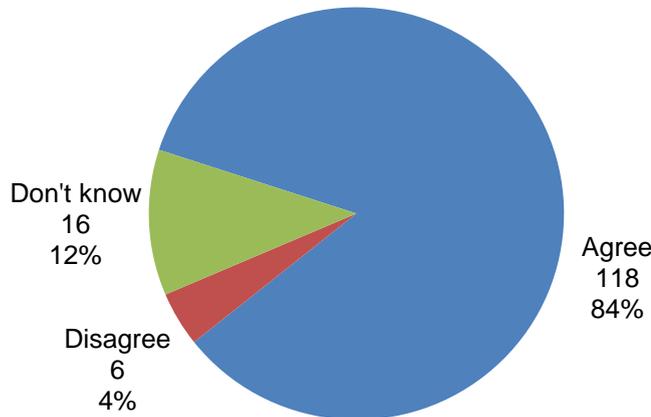
No change to one-to-one evidence based parenting programmes



Most respondents agree to these parenting programmes continuing unchanged. The programmes are accessed via referral and are: Incredible Years Baby, Incredible Years Toddler, Incredible Years Pre School, Personalised Individualised Parenting Therapy (PIPT) and Stepping Stones.

Proposal 6

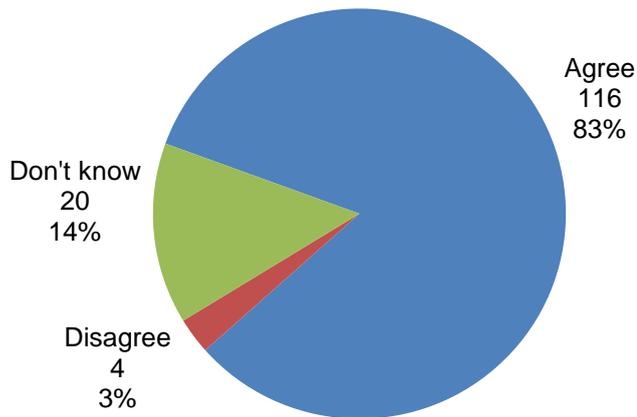
No change to the way in which we work with Midwifery services to provide access to ante- and post-natal services



Most respondents agreed with continuing to provide access to Epsom and St Helier and St George's NHS Trusts Midwifery services, which are offered within children's centre buildings.

Proposal 7

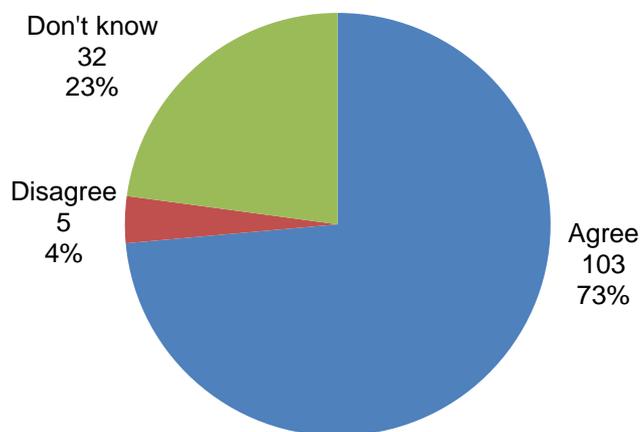
No change to the way in which we work with the Health Visiting service to provide access to services delivered as part of the Healthy Child Programme



Most respondents agree to the continuation of the current Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) NHS Trust Health Visiting Service delivery in children's centres.

Proposal 8

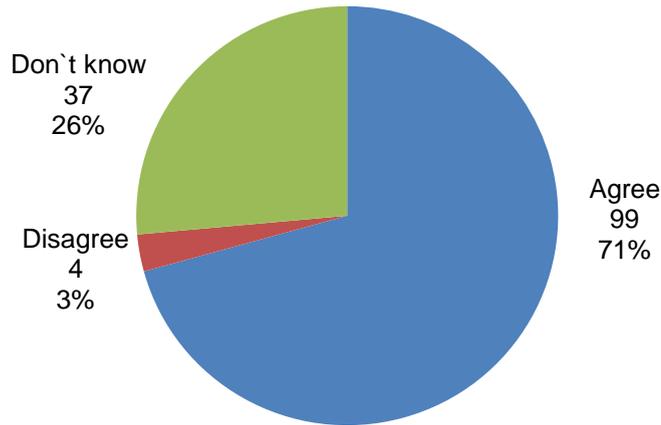
Provision of information



Most respondents agree with the proposal to further develop the information available via the Merton Family Services Directory and Local Offer websites to ensure ease of access for users. The proposal also includes face-to-face information support from staff at two children's centres.

Proposal 9

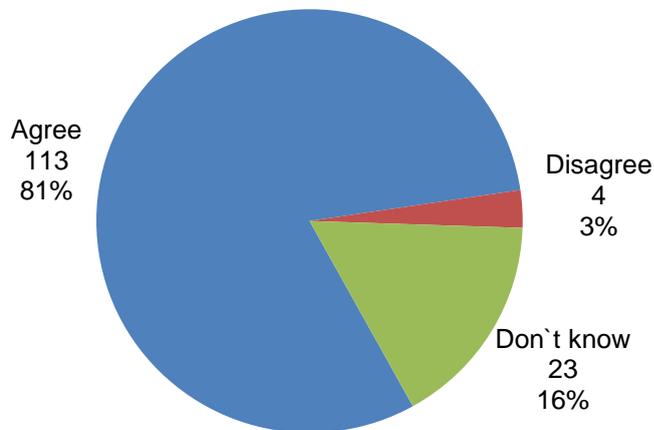
Working with volunteering, education and employability support providers



The proposal to work with other community providers of volunteering, education and employability support at two children's centres is agreed to by most respondents.

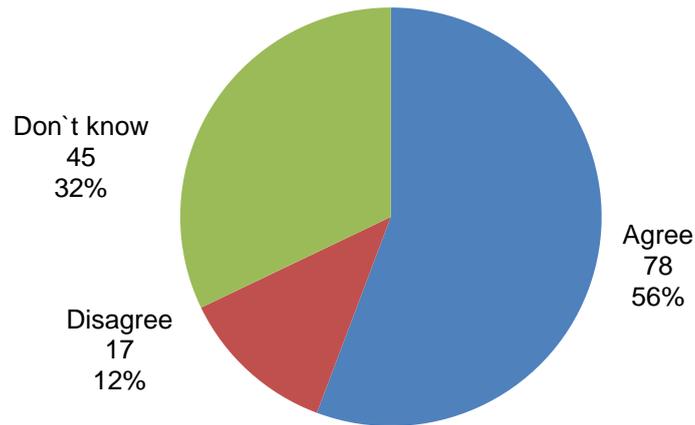
Proposal 10

Develop a parent forum



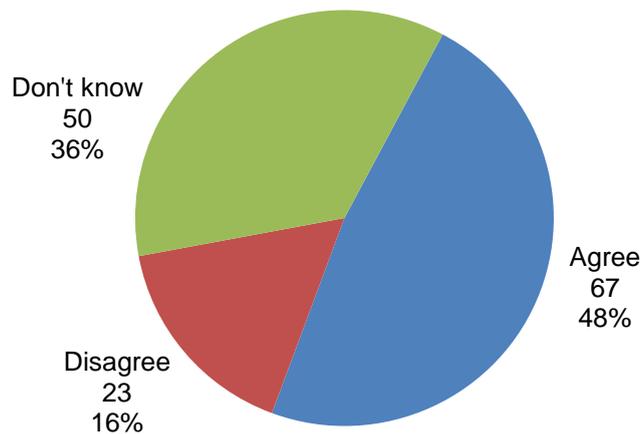
Most respondents agree to a children's centre parent forum being developed, with parents' views to be used to inform future service development.

Proposal 11
Regarding community use of centres



Just over half of respondents agree to the need to change the day and time community group services run due to the proposed change in opening hours and timetabling and the need for some groups to be asked to contribute financially to the use of the buildings in accordance with our rental agreements. Just under a third of respondents neither agree nor disagreed with this proposal

Proposal 12
Move to one borough-wide local advisory board



The proposal to move from 3 Advisory Boards to 1 Advisory Board that represents the whole borough, supported by the Parent Forum was agreed by just under half of respondents, though over a third neither agreed nor disagreed.