

# **Consultation on improving support services for children and young people**

Final Consultation results

By

Community Intelligence

## Purpose of consultation

We currently deliver a wide range of services that aim to give children the best start in life and to support families, parents, children and young people. Some of these support services are provided by other organisations on our behalf.

As these contracts near their end dates, we have an opportunity to think about a different and more effective way of delivering these services

Our proposal is to extend our children's centre offer to provide **family services** – currently services are offered for 0-5 year olds, but we want to extend this to 0-12 year olds. The core services and activities currently delivered by children's centres will continue. We will need to develop the services for 6-12 year olds over time as this is a new service area. It will focus on opportunities to support 6-12 year olds outside of school hours and as part of a more holistic approach to the whole family.

We want to make sure we continue to have a good quality and safe **supervised contact service**, and need to prioritise making the sessions as close to the child as possible, to reduce travel times.

We are proposing to continue the **youth services** that include targeted youth work, targeted careers information and advice, mentoring and independent visiting

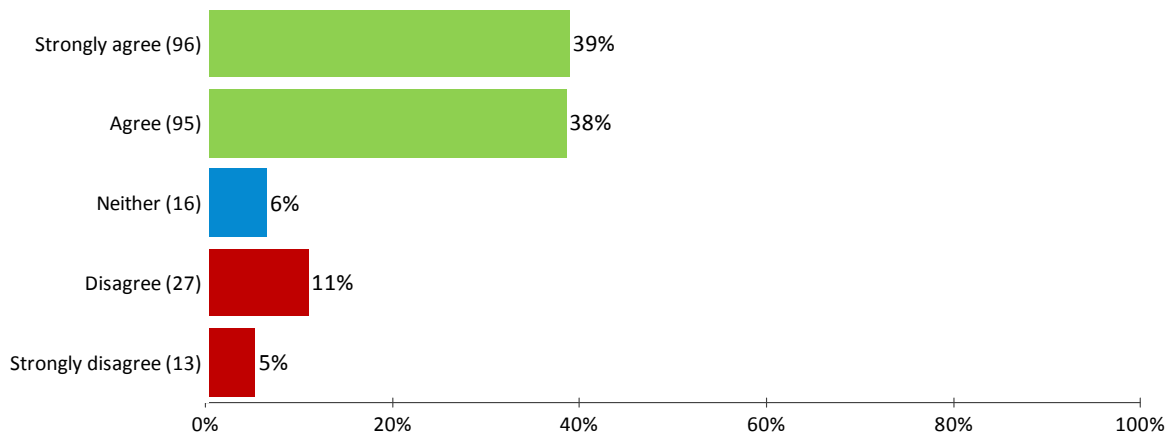
## Feedback on proposal

The consultation has been promoted by the Communications team through a press release, e-mail bulletin, social media posts and on our consultation webpage. The Children's Services Commissioning team have also been carrying out supporting engagement activities. Interim results were generated after three weeks and had achieved 75 responses at that point.

By the end of the consultation period we had achieved 247 responses overall.

## Question 1

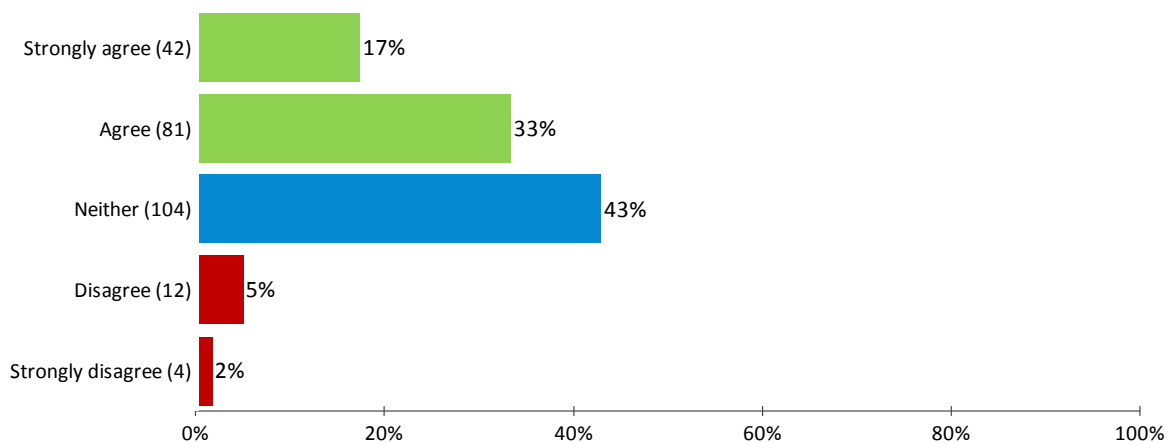
How far do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to extend our children's centre offer to provide a family service for 0-12 year olds?



77% of responses agreed with the proposed change to extend the age range covered and to provide a family service. This question received the highest level of support in the questionnaire, highlighting a keen interest for family involvement within the children's centres.

## Question 2

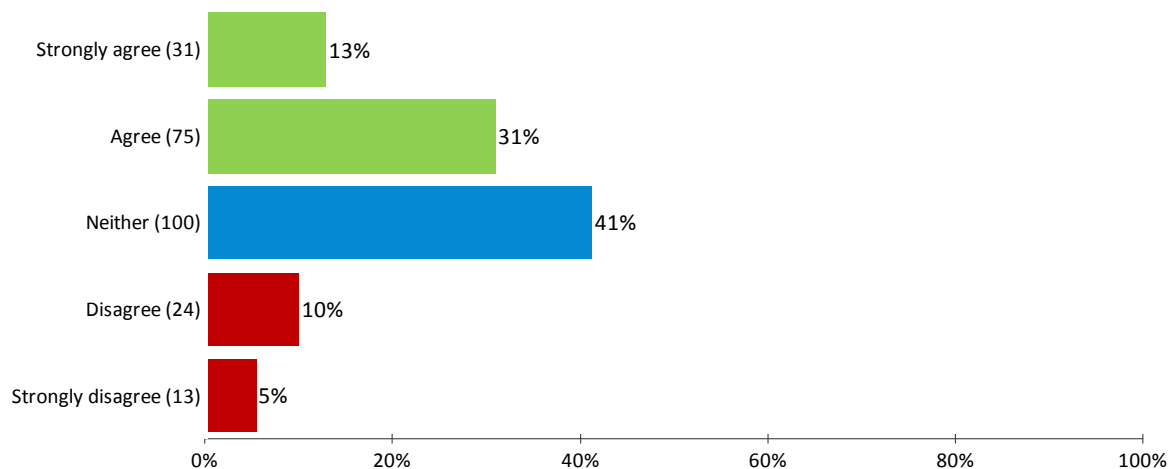
How far do you agree or disagree with no change to the Supervised Contact Service (other than to prioritise making sessions as close to the child as possible)?



50% agreed with the proposal for no change to the supervised contact service. The considerable percentage of 'neither' may be attributed to respondents not knowing about the current offer.

### Question 3

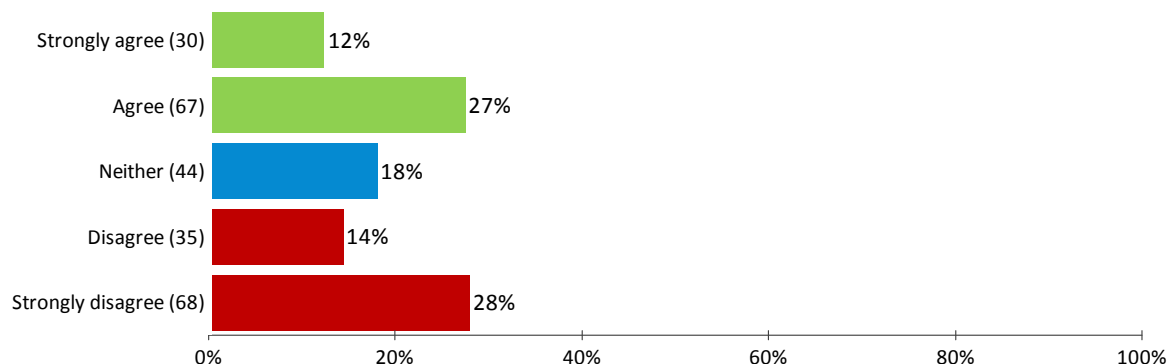
How far do you agree or disagree with no change to the types of Youth Services provided (mentoring, targeted youth work, careers advice and independent visiting)?



44% agreed with the proposal for no change to the types of youth services provided. The considerable percentage of 'neither' may be attributed to respondents not knowing about the current offer.

### Question 4

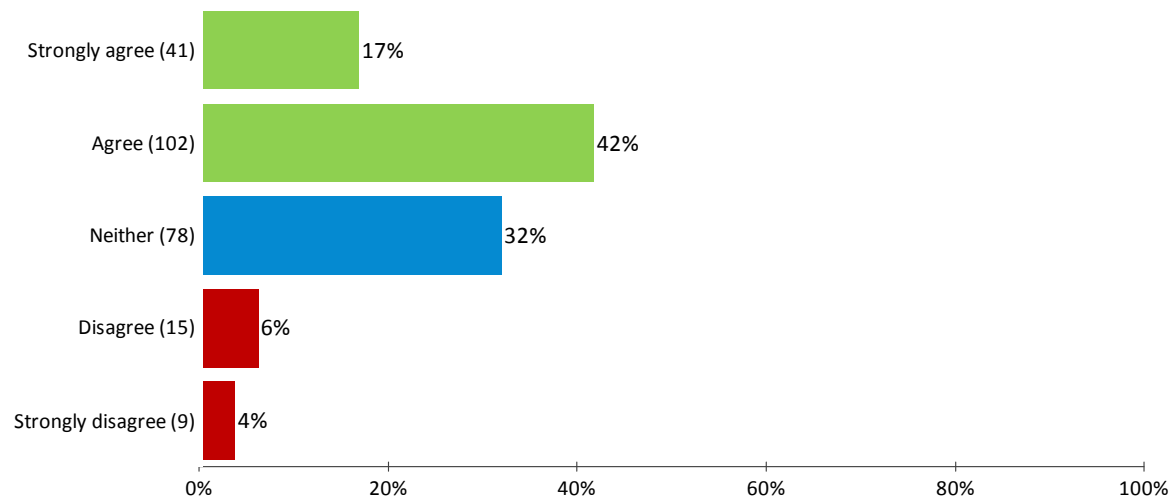
How far do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to commission the new Family Service through five area/locality based services?



39% agreed with the proposed approach to commission the new family service through five area services, with 42% disagreeing. This has changed from the interim report. In the interim report, 57% agreed. This response also tallies with the open-ended comments related to concern about the need to travel to access services. This would indicate that there are worries about closure of existing centres which may make access more challenging (again, highlighted in the open-ended comments).

## Question 5

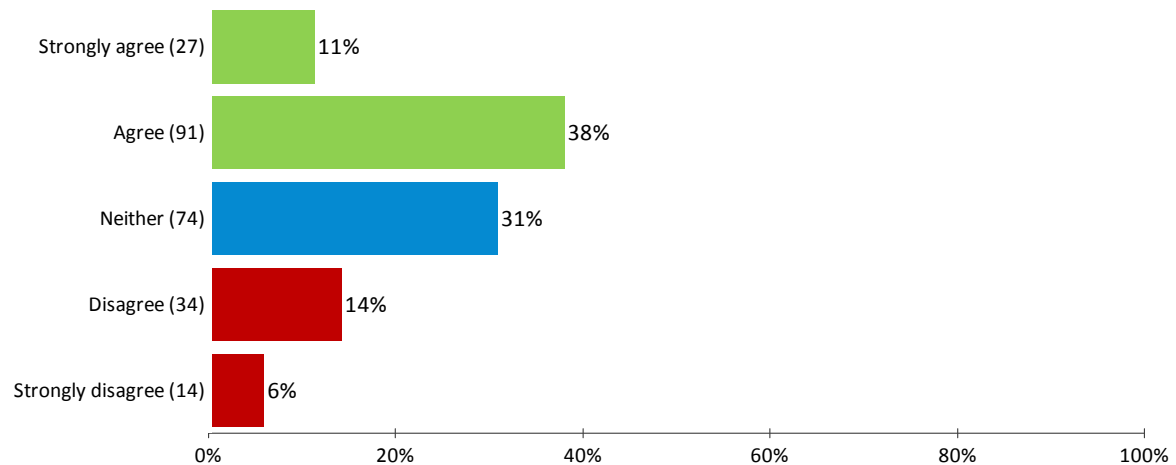
How far do you agree or disagree that the Supervised Contact Service, that enables children looked after by the authority to have safe contact with their birth family, should be commissioned through one contract...?



59% agreed that the supervised contact service should be commissioned through one contract.

## Question 6

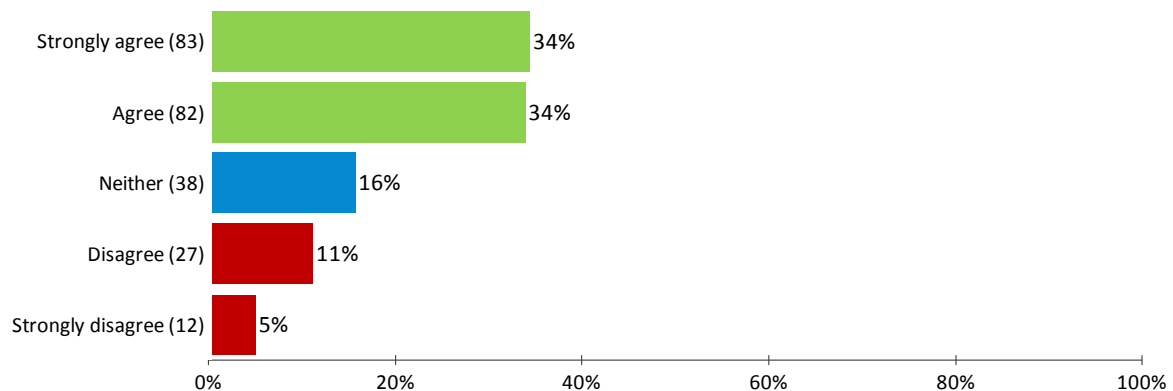
How far do you agree or disagree that the Youth Services, which includes mentoring, targeted youth work, careers advice and independent visiting should be commissioned through one contract (rather than three as we do currently)?



49% agreed that the youth services should be commissioned through one contract. Comments were included in Question 10 about the valued role of Youth work with many stating it was particularly valuable. 66% agreed in the interim results.

## Question 7

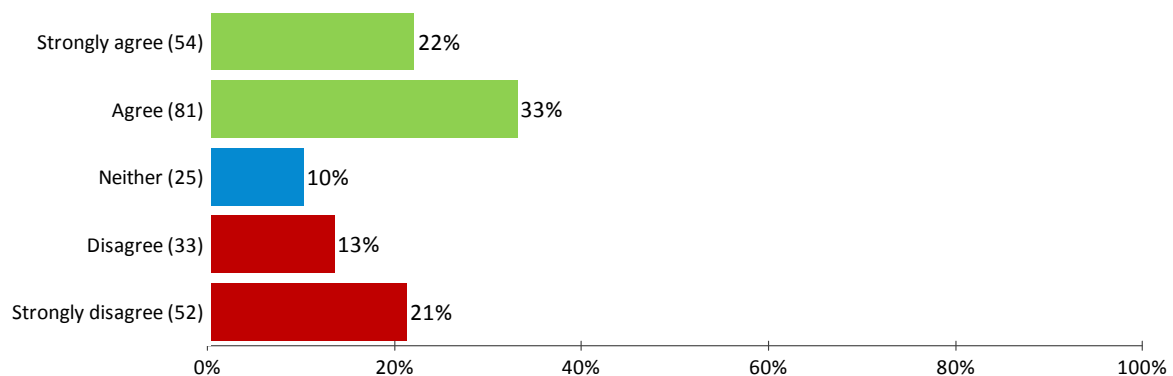
How far do you agree or disagree that that services provided should be measured by the positive impact they will make to people's lives, rather than how many people have accessed them?



68% agreed that services provided should be measured by the positive impact they have. This question received one of the highest levels of support within the questionnaire. 77% agreed in the interim report.

## Question 8

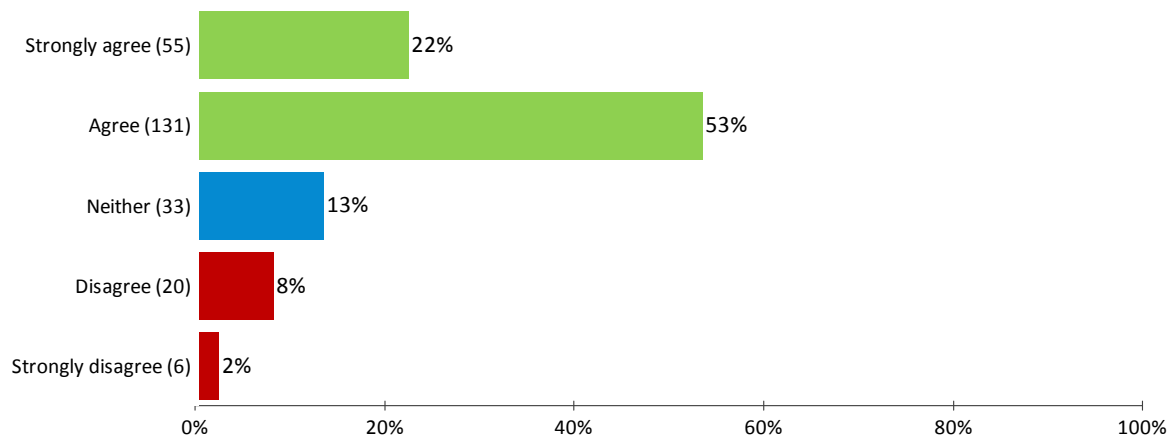
How far do you agree or disagree that we should deliver services through a range of community buildings?



55% agreed that we should deliver services through a range of community buildings. 70% agreed at the interim stage. In the interim report, concerns about the need to travel to outreach buildings didn't really feature, however in the final overall analysis, there were a number of comments in the open-ended question which highlighted concerns about having to travel further to access services (with some respondents mentioning lack of public transport as a potential barrier).

## Question 9

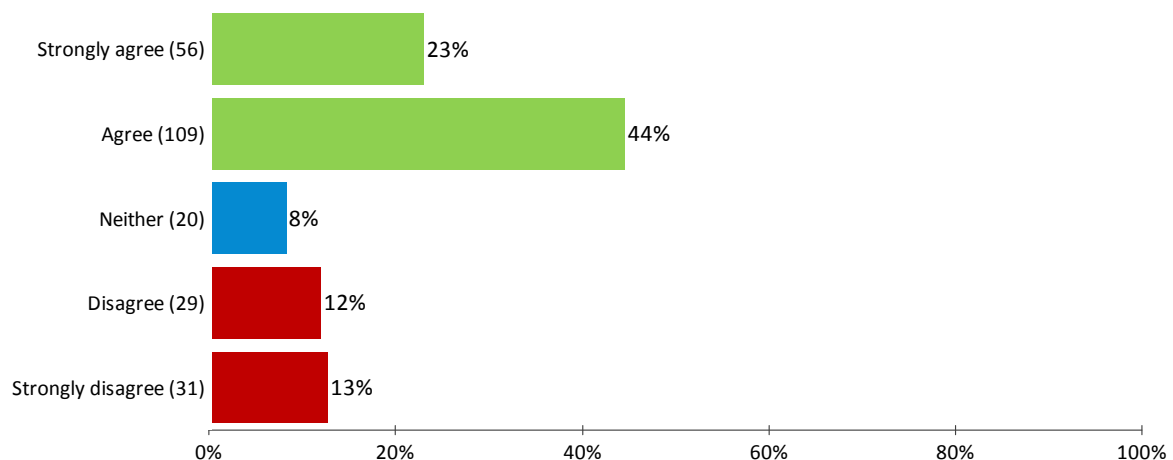
Family and Youth Partnerships will bring together all of the agencies working with families and young people...How far do you agree or disagree with this aim, to develop Family and Youth Partnerships?



75% agreed with the development of Family and Youth Partnerships. This question received the second highest level of support within the questionnaire. 83% agreed in interims.

## Question 10

How far do you agree or disagree that the Family Services can be offered on a voluntary donation model?



67% agreed with the proposal of a voluntary donation model. A number of comments were included in Question 11 with responses varying from support, to concern that it excludes those who cannot afford to pay, with some suggesting that services should be available to all. There was also a suggestion that the more general 'stay and play' groups should use a donation model to echo other organisations (such as church groups which charge). 77% agreed at interims.

## Question 11

Question 11 asked respondents for their comments about the proposed approach.

Theme	No. of comments
Children's Centres are valued	53
Concern about needing to travel to access services	22
General support	19
Concern around expanding services when current offer is being squeezed	16
It is expensive to hire external venues	8
Concern around area-specific issues	7
There is a need to co-ordinate/improve communication with other services/departments/agencies	6
Will one provider have the expertise needed?	6
Some may not be able to afford to pay	6
Agreement with donations	4
Importance of youth clubs/workers	2
People won't want to pay to access services	2
Other	32

At the interim stage, the most common themes were around general support for proposals and that Children's Centres are valued. At the end of the consultation we saw the number of responses around Children's Centres are valued increase. We also saw two new themes emerge – around concern about needing to travel to access services, and comments about the expense of hiring external venues for outreach work.

Some of the comments received were:

*"It makes sense to use a family service/ 0-12 locality model."*

*"If one service provider is commissioned to provide across Central Bedfordshire the result will be the same as the Health commission, which is local asset stripping. Each area is unique and one size does not fit all. The urban conurbations are very different from the rural areas and each have their own strengths, weaknesses and resources...There is much emphasis of working in partnership but there seems to be a 'selectiveness' to which Town and Parishes are engaged with and listened too. Leighton Linlade and Dunstable Town Councils invest in youth work but are not taken into consideration when engaging in commissioned services. This leads to duplication and omission of services..."*



*"I think it is a bad idea to try to extend to cover a bigger age range when you have so recently had to reduce what you offer to 0-5 year olds... I also think it is a bad idea to charge a '£1 voluntary donation' as people feel obliged and therefore don't come if they can't afford the £1..."*

*"The children centre buildings are so important. It provides a safe place for parents/carers to go to where they can find the help they need. Taking this service away would leave people wondering where to go. Also some mothers I know...had to really build up the courage to attend classes with their babies/children. Once they were familiar with the children centre they found it a comfortable place to be in. If the venues are regularly changed for groups and classes I think some mothers would be less likely to attend than them."*

*"Public transport in Shefford is too limited to enable me to attend groups in other places"*

*"The small amount of money saved by reducing the number of contracts will be spent very quickly on very high hire prices for venues. Some areas also have very limited venues available."*

## **Question 12**

Question 12 asked respondents for any other suggestions that were not included in the consultation document. Due to the nature of this question, responses covered all sorts of areas, but those which appeared a number of times were around the inclusion of mental health/SEND in the coverage and working closer with a number of other agencies/organisations (such as schools, town councils, other local county councils and voluntary organisations).

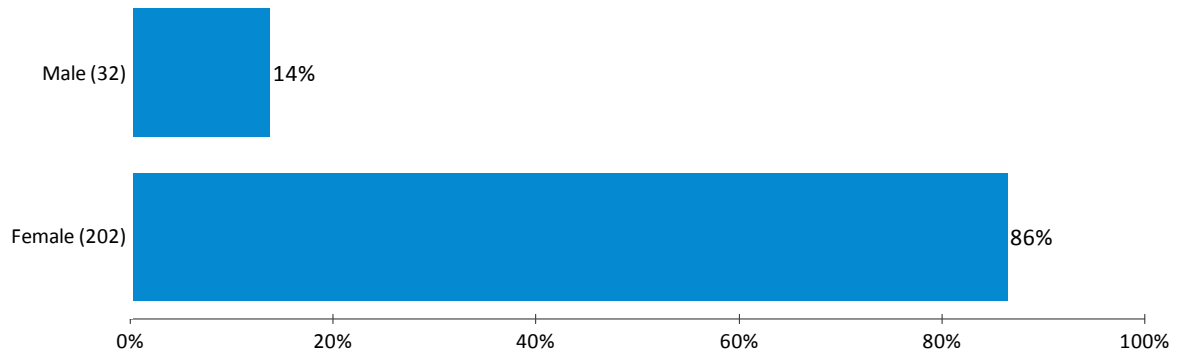
*"Improve mental health provision."*

*"Access for children with special educational need and their families, especially siblings that are not JUST for SEND."*

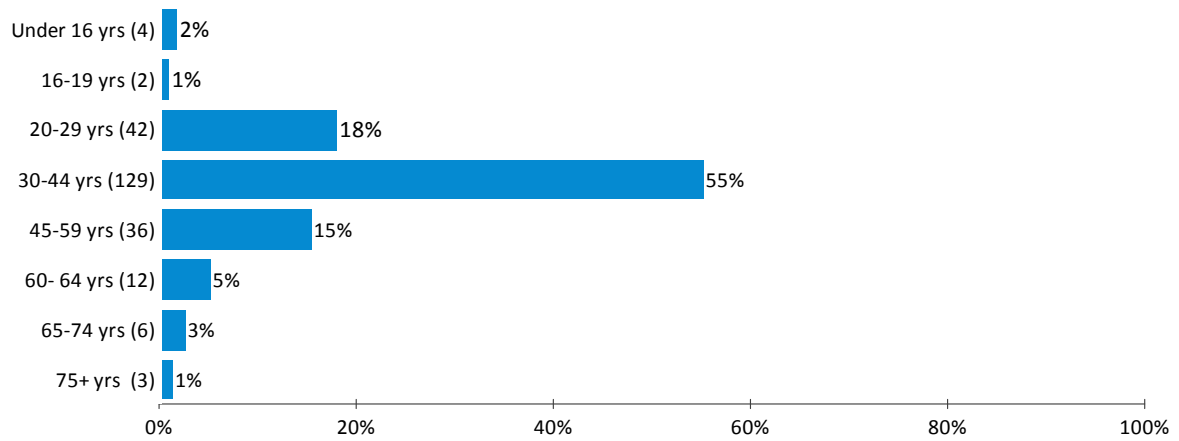
*"A fresh look with fresh eyes is required , working with other country council, such as Hertfordshire/Buckinghamshire should also be considered, afterall, they will have the same problems. In the age of companies using globisation to reduce costs and improve service, why can't country council, local council and cross functional country council work?"*

## About You

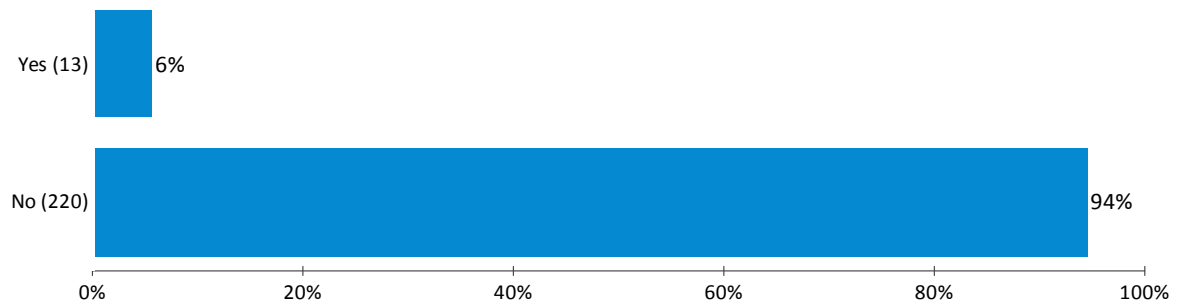
Are you: (please select one)

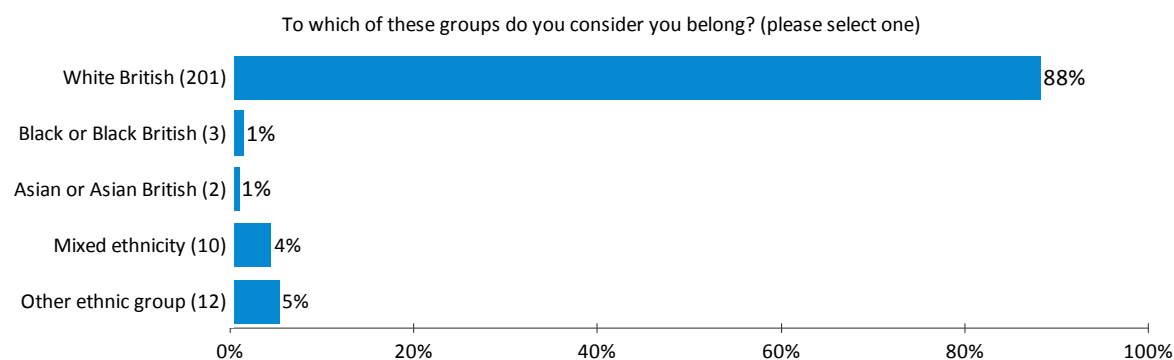


What is your age? (please select one)



Do you consider yourself disabled? (please select one)





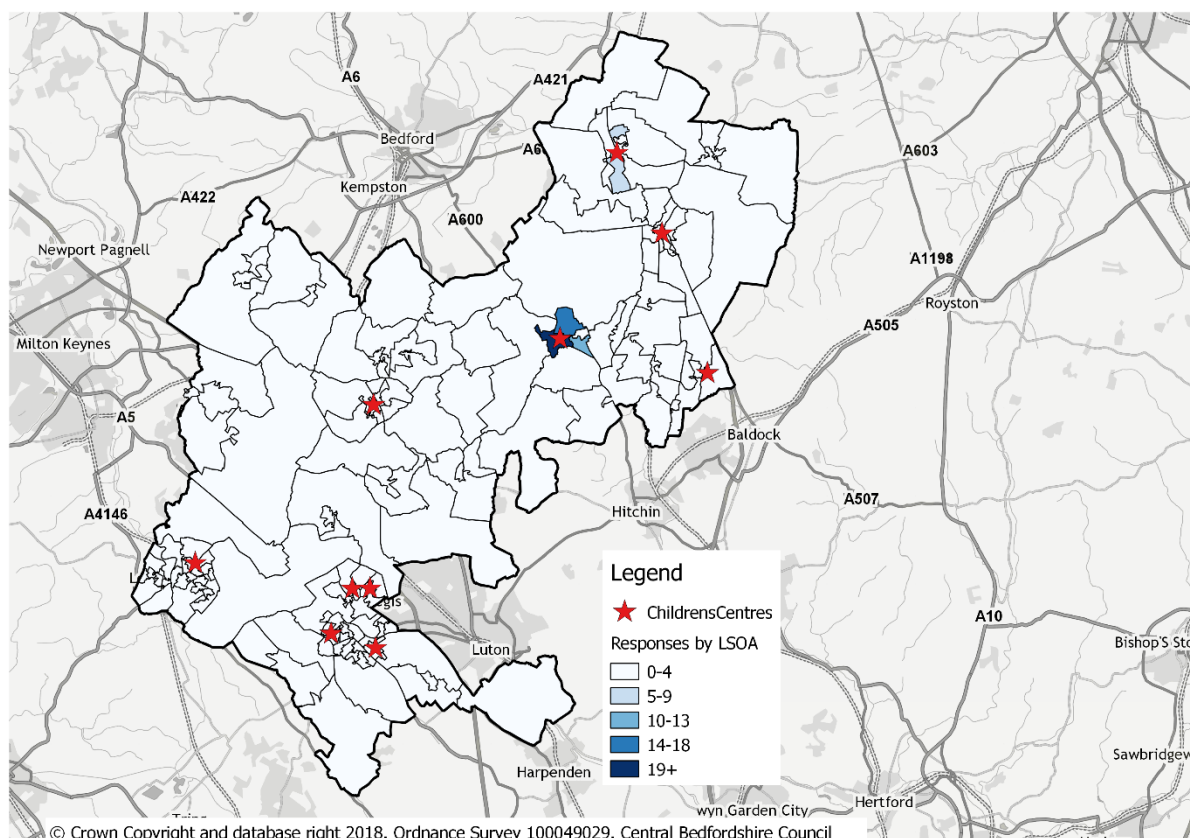
**If other, please specify:**

- White English
- European
- White European
- polish
- White Portugese
- German background. White Brit
- White, Irish
- white other
- white other

The demographics of respondents are broadly what we would expect to see, with an over-representation of the groups most likely to use Children’s Centres (females aged 20-44).

## Postcode analysis

A review of postcodes indicates that respondents were from across the Central Bedfordshire area and particularly focused in areas close to existing Children's Centres, with a particular concentration in Shefford.



## Conclusion

This consultation saw good levels of engagement from members of the public and service users. A number of engagement activities were held towards the end of fieldwork which increased the response, and as a result the level of overall support changed. There were differences in the level of support for many proposals from the interim results to the final results. Despite this, there is general agreement with the proposals (aside from the 5 area/locality based model).

Key themes arising are the need for both Children's Centres and Youth Clubs (and youth workers) and the roles they play in the development of children and that both should be protected, alongside the need for organisations to communicate with each other, and concerns around the flexibility of services if they're provided on a locality basis.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

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