



Luton

Children's Centres Redesign Public Consultation Report

September 2020

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Education

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Introduction

Luton Borough Council is required to achieve £22 million worth of savings to balance the budget for 2020-2021. Children's services have to make £3.2m worth of savings as set out in the July 2020 emergency budget. To minimise the impact on statutory services, the proposal was made to bring together four of our non-statutory children's services, Flying Start Children's Centres, Early Help, Fresh Start and Manor Contact Centre into one integrated family resource service. This proposal will provide a targeted support offer, to those families assessed as requiring the most support, through a new Integrated Family Resource Service.

The public consultation was developed to enable parents, carers and other stakeholders the opportunity to comment on and influence the design of the proposal. The consultation ran from the 3rd of August to the 20th of September 2020. It was widely publicised across Luton councils and Flying Start's social media accounts. Flying start staff contacted all service users who had accessed the service in the past year (going back to April 2019) and support offered to complete the consultation. The consultation was available in the six most widely spoken community languages and as an easy read version. In addition five public meetings were arranged using the Zoom platform at various times to accommodate family life. The first two meetings were well attended, attendance did decline for the subsequent ones. An independent Facebook group and online petition were created to campaign to keep the centres open, with support provided from the National Save Our Children's Centres campaign group.

The consultation received 1251 responses, the petition received 1751 signatures and combined with the other written representations show the value that Luton's citizens have for the support provided by Flying Start Children's Centres.

1: Are you responding to this consultation mainly as a...?

There were 1222 responses to this part of the question. In regards to stakeholders, the majority of the responses came from the parent / carer group with 906 responses.

Option	Total	Percent
Parent / Carer	906	72.42%
Young person under 18	10	0.80%
Member of the public	115	9.19%
Health representative / GP	36	2.88%
School representative	29	2.32%
Trade union representative	0	0.00%
Children's centre member of staff	32	2.56%
Voluntary and community sector organisation	27	2.16%
Private sector organisation	13	1.04%
Council member / Member of Parliament	5	0.40%
Other	49	3.92%
Not Answered	29	2.32%





Respondent type, other

There were 62 responses to this part of the question.

See below types of 'other' respondents:

Pre-School Deputy Manager | Council Employee | Retired Early Years Consultant |
Pre-School Practitioner | Grandparent | Nursery Worker | Family Worker |
Expecting Mum | Parent and Health Professional | Service User |
Parent Carer and ex-Chair of the Luton Parent Carer Forum |
Family Member of Staff | School Governor | Professional | Childminder |
Parent | Volunteer Teacher | Student | Service Provider | Retired Teacher |
Early Years Consultant | Chair of Luton and Dunstable Maternity Voices Partnership
| Service Provider

Name of organisation

There were 63 responses to this part of the question.

See below list of organisations that participated in the consultation:

Flying Start | CA Luton | Parktown Pre-School | Cambridge Community Services |
Luton Council | 0-19 Children's Services | Starfish Enterprise |
Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church | Chaul End and Downside Nursery |
SALTO Gymnastic Club | Pirton Hill Primary School | Breastfeeding Network |
Greenside Childcare Ltd | Luton and Dunstable Hospital | The Old Forum |
Health Visiting | Gill Blowers Nursery School | Early Help Team |
Bushmead Community Hub | Bundles of Fun | Training Depot Day Nursery |
Active Luton | Oasis Drop in Centre | Chapel Street Nursery Hall |
Early Years Alliance | Community Action Bedfordshire | Beech Hill Primary School |
Leagrave Primary School | Luton and Dunstable Maternity Voices Partnership |
Safe at Home

2: Do you have a child or children with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities?

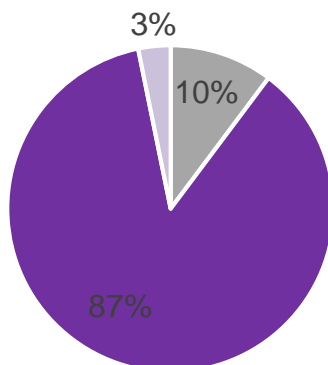
There were 1211 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	128	10.23%
No	1083	86.57%
Not Answered	40	3.20%



Does your child have SEND?

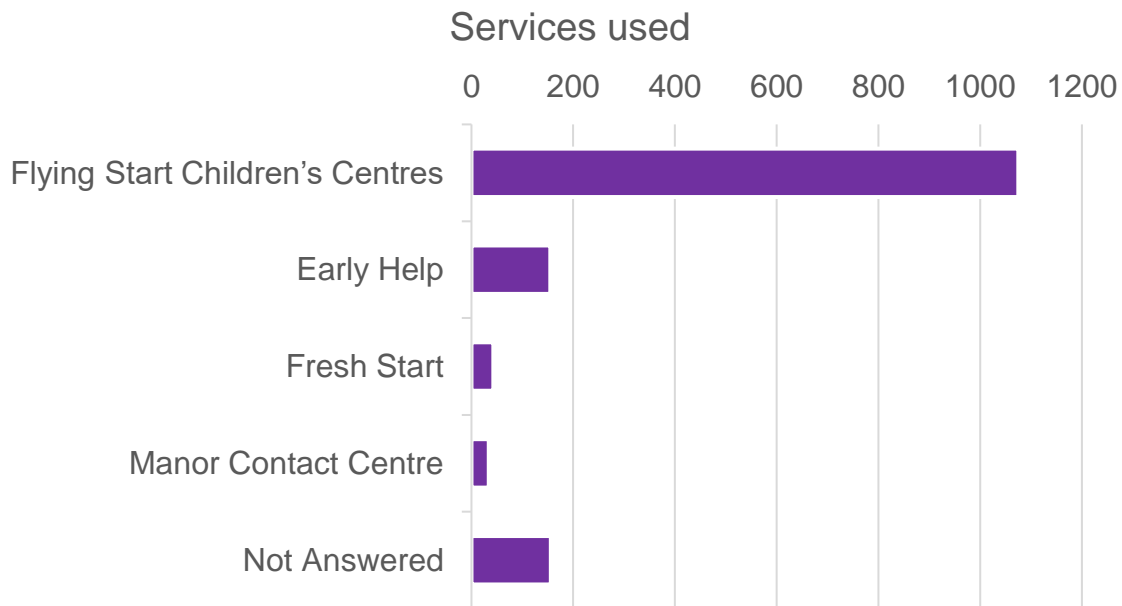
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Answered



3: Have you used any of the services stated below in the last two years? If so please tick relevant services

There were 1095 responses to this part of the question. Of the 1095 respondents, 1075 have used Flying start children centres within the last two years.

Option	Total	Percent
Flying Start Children's Centres	1075	85.93%
Early Help	155	12.39%
Fresh Start	43	3.44%
Manor Contact Centre	34	2.72%
Not Answered	156	12.47%



4: How often in normal circumstances (e.g. before the COVID-19 crisis) would you use children's centre services in Luton?

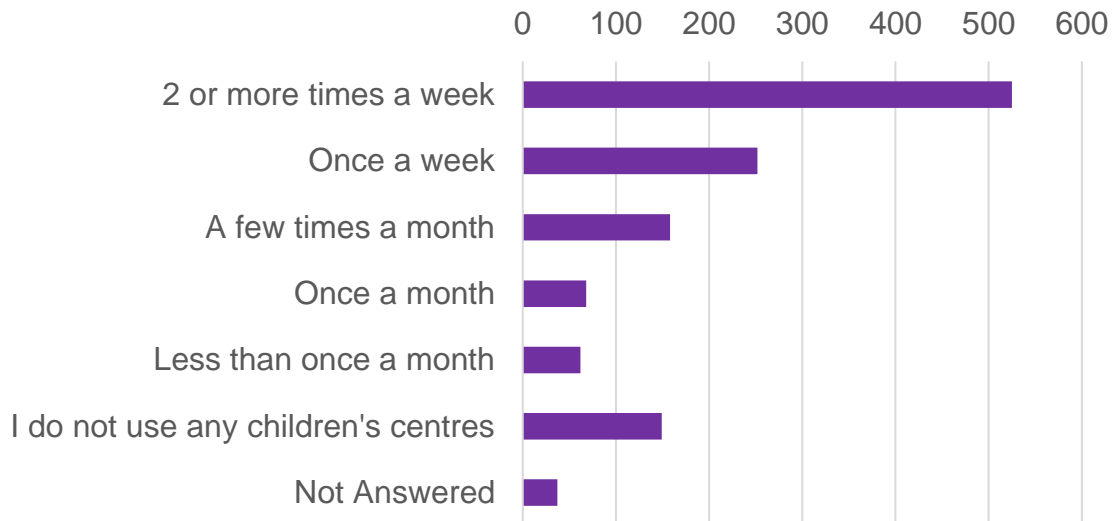
There were 1214 responses to this part of the question. Almost two thirds use the Children Centres at least once a week or more. 149 respondents do not use any of the children's centres.

The Children's Centres typically offers somewhere between 115 and 120 sessions per week, this does not include case work undertaken by Family Workers with individual families.

Option	Total	Percent
2 or more times a week	525	41.97%
Once a week	252	20.14%
A few times a month	158	12.63%
Once a month	68	5.44%
Less than once a month	62	4.96%
I do not use any children's centres	149	11.91%
Not Answered	37	2.96%



How often in normal circumstances would you use the children's centre services in Luton?



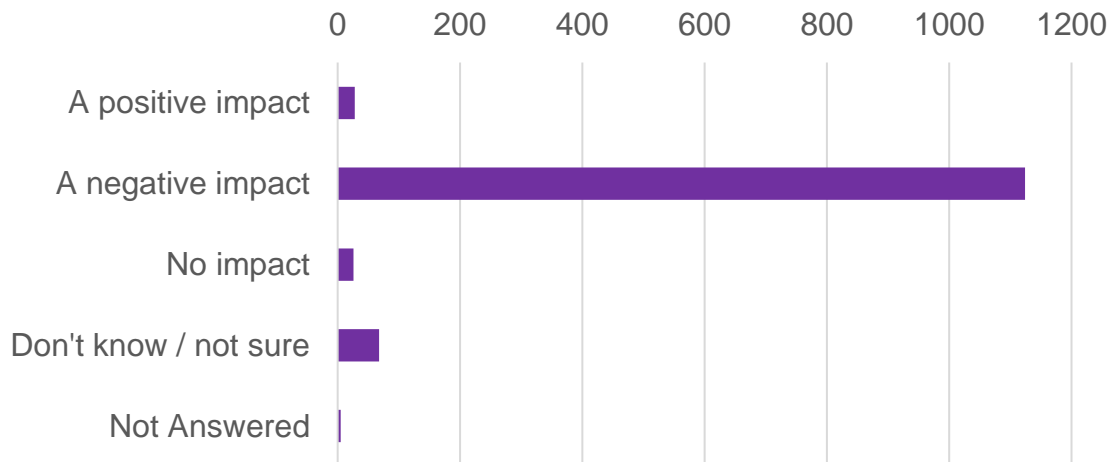
5: Do you think the proposed changes will have a positive or negative impact on you, your family and/or others?

There were 1246 responses to this part of the question. 90% of all respondents believe this will have a negative impact on them, their family and others.

Option	Total	Percent
A positive impact	28	2.24%
A negative impact	1124	89.85%
No impact	26	2.08%
Don't know / not sure	68	5.44%
Not Answered	5	0.40%



Do you think the proposed changes will have a positive or negative impact on you, your family and/or others?



6: Which universal activities do you feel are essential and should be considered as a priority?

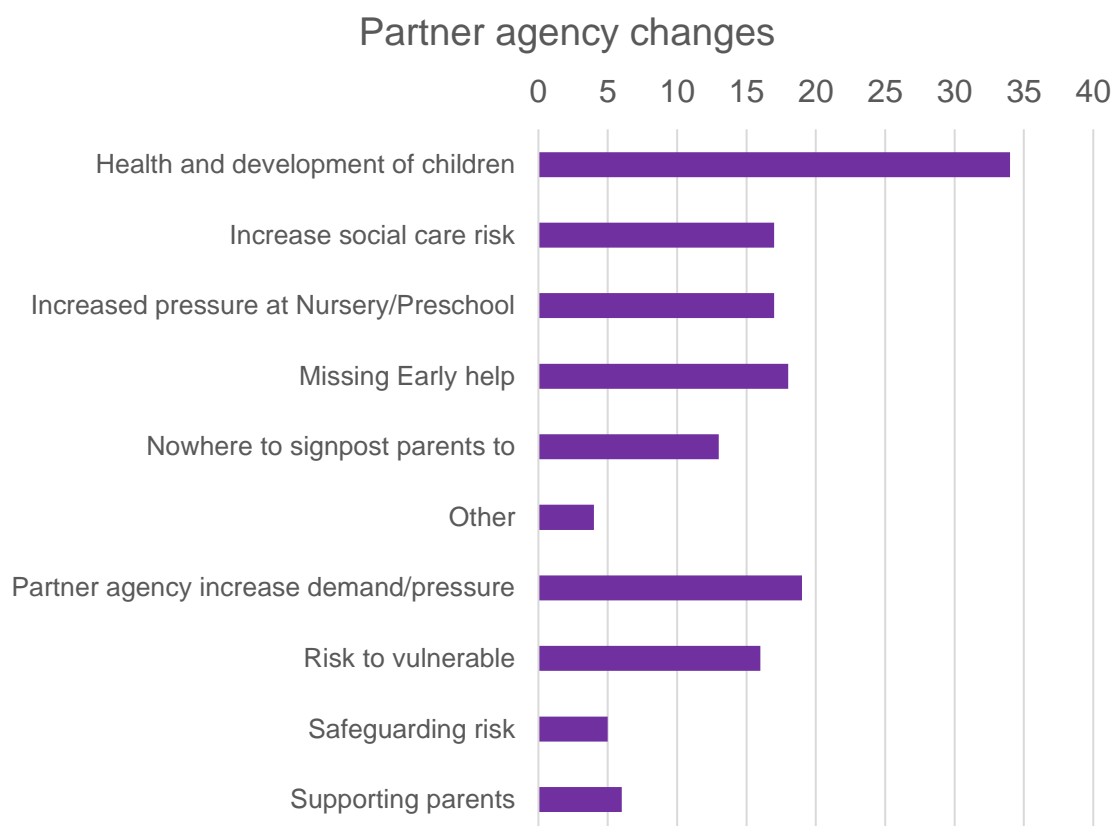
There were 1134 responses to this part of the question. The responses have been presented below as a word cloud to show the most used words:



7: If you are a partner agency how do you feel the changes will affect your service and the families you support?

There were 149 responses to this part of the question.

Partner agency changes	Total	Percent
Health and development of children	34	22.82%
Increase social care risk	17	11.41%
Increased pressure at Nursery/Preschool	17	11.41%
Missing Early help	18	12.08%
Nowhere to signpost parents to	13	8.72%
Other	4	2.68%
Partner agency increase demand/pressure	19	12.75%
Risk to vulnerable	16	10.74%
Safeguarding risk	5	3.36%
Supporting parents	6	4.03%



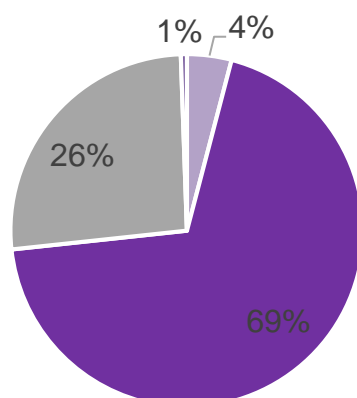
8: Do you think that the proposed changes to an Integrated Family Resource Services will meet the needs of Luton's most vulnerable families?

There were 1244 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	51	4.08%
No	866	69.22%
Don't know / not sure	327	26.14%
Not Answered	7	0.56%

Do you think that the proposed changes to an integrated Family Resource Services will meet the needs of Luton's most vulnerable families?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know / not sure ■ Not Answered



9: Do you have any suggestions for alternative ways that the Council can deliver the required savings?

There were 648 responses to this part of the question.

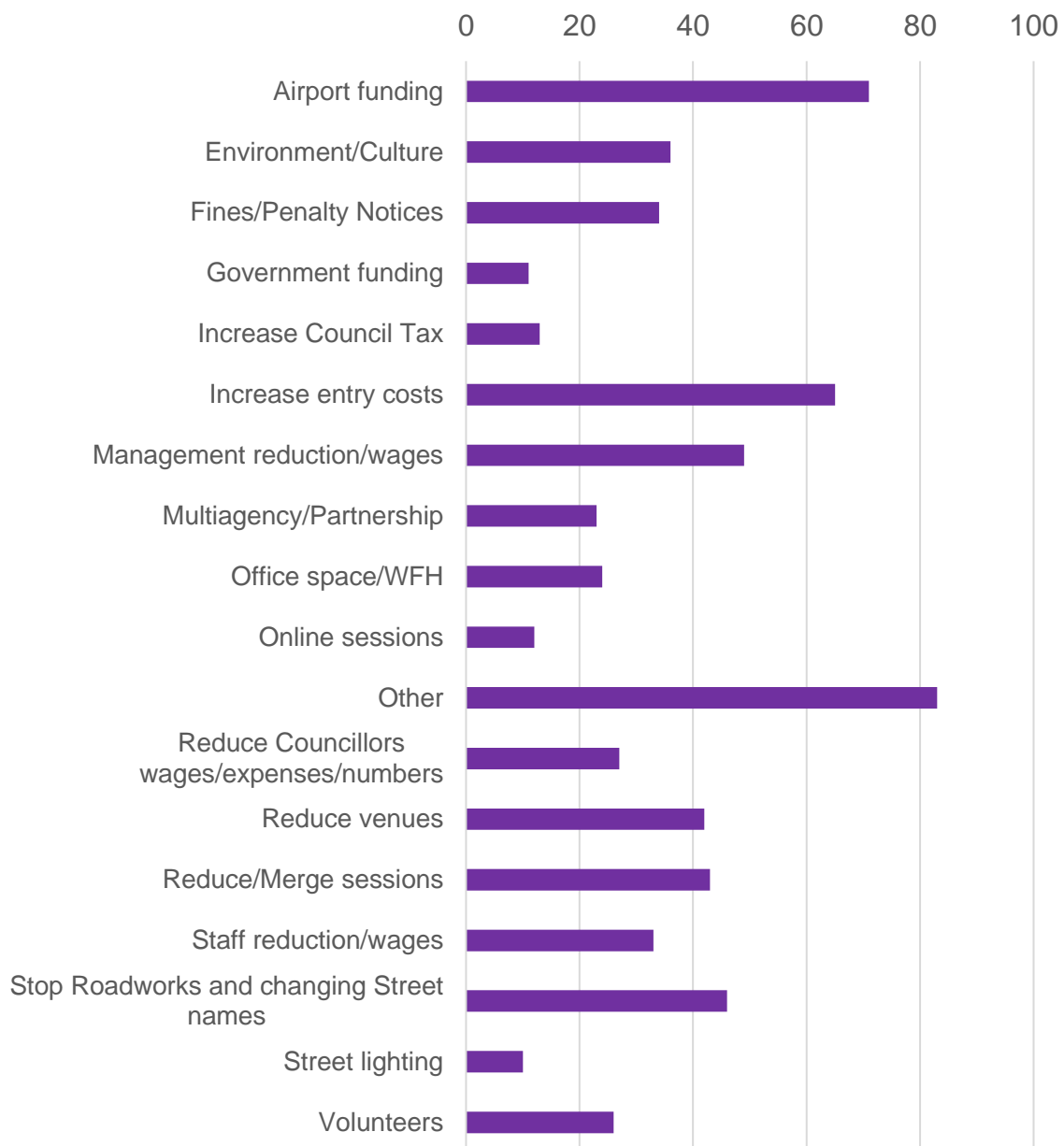
Alternative way to deliver savings	Total	Percent
Airport funding	71	10.96%
Reduce Councillors wages/expenses/numbers	27	4.17%
Environment/Culture	36	5.56%



Fines/Penalty Notices	34	5.25%
Government funding	11	1.70%
Increase entry costs	65	10.03%
Street lighting	10	1.54%
Management reduction/wages	49	7.56%
Multiagency/Partnership	23	3.55%
Office space/working from home	24	3.70%
Online sessions	12	1.85%
Other	83	12.81%
Reduce/Merge sessions	43	6.64%
Reduce venues	42	6.48%
Stop Roadworks and changing street names	46	7.10%
Staff reduction/wages	33	5.09%
Increase Council Tax	13	2.01%
Volunteers	26	4.01%



Alternative way to deliver savings?



Many people felt that they did not know enough about the Council budget to suggest where savings could be made. However, see below few examples of suggestions we had in response to this question, many of the more detailed responses were from Children’s Centre staff:

“Children’s centre services could be delivered on a smaller budget - families still need access points - more centres need to remain open”

“Ensure that there is one children’s centre left open per area that would reduce cost but still provide sessions. Perhaps consolidating the services into fewer locations, running less frequently but not doing away with them altogether”



“I calculate £1.67 million savings could be made from children's centres. Without losing the service in its entirety and working as an integrated stream of a new Early Help Model. By reducing staffing to two much smaller staff teams totalling 18 staff. Total staffing cost of £621,500. This ensures a targeted children's centre service that delivers parenting most cost effectively, utilising the skills of support staff. A small number of family workers who do not case work, but focus on group delivery also simplifies and provides efficiencies across a new model that supports a 0-19 (0-25)integrated service to meets all elements described in the consultation document, building capacity for those holding L3 & L4 cases by enabling many tasks to be completed by supporting staff. Simply put, retain the best elements of the service we have rather than closing down a service that is effective in supporting the most vulnerable children in Luton. Retaining inexpensive premises and hiring community venues by the hour enables targeted support in the most disadvantaged or data identified areas, in need of greatest support, using an already paid for van to resource groups, supported by community volunteers provides economy of scale. Total Cost £60K. Running Costs £10K with targets set for income generation as in previous years before the children's centres were taken into the Council. Total cost: £691,500”

“Separate out the four services rather than combining them. Allow Manor Contact Centre and London Road to continue without significant change and minor budget cuts (offering up any vacancies) and focus on combining Children's Centre teams and Early Help teams to create a new model of family hubs with staff who deliver services and support to families at Level 2 (universal services to be delivered as per the consultation by community and voluntary groups). This would mean a much reduced Early Help and Children's Centre service but would retain a focus on early intervention and early years and give the local authority a workforce to deliver services to families with emerging needs and provide support to partner agencies wanting to do an EHA and organise a Team Around the Family”

“This is an invest to save programme. Money spent on successful prevention and early intervention in the early years has been shown to reduce the drain on the public purse in the long term. For example, supporting children's communication needs in the early years can prevent those children growing into adults with communication needs who, statistically, are more likely to end up in prison”

“The six maintained nursery schools were originally all children centres. They are positioned in the most deprived areas of Luton. With the correct funding they would be able to offer services again. At Chapel Street there are staff trained to deliver Peep, Freedom Program, Baby Massage, Stay and Play to name but a few. There is only one family worker who's time is 100% taken up with safeguarding issues. With funding for more staff that were not in the ratio for children attending the nursery we would be able to offer these services to parents in our community”

“Charge slightly more for attendance at sessions. £1 was extremely good value but I think sessions could cost at least £2.50. Stop providing snacks for children”

“Make greater use of volunteers”



“Stop spending money on roads/infrastructure”

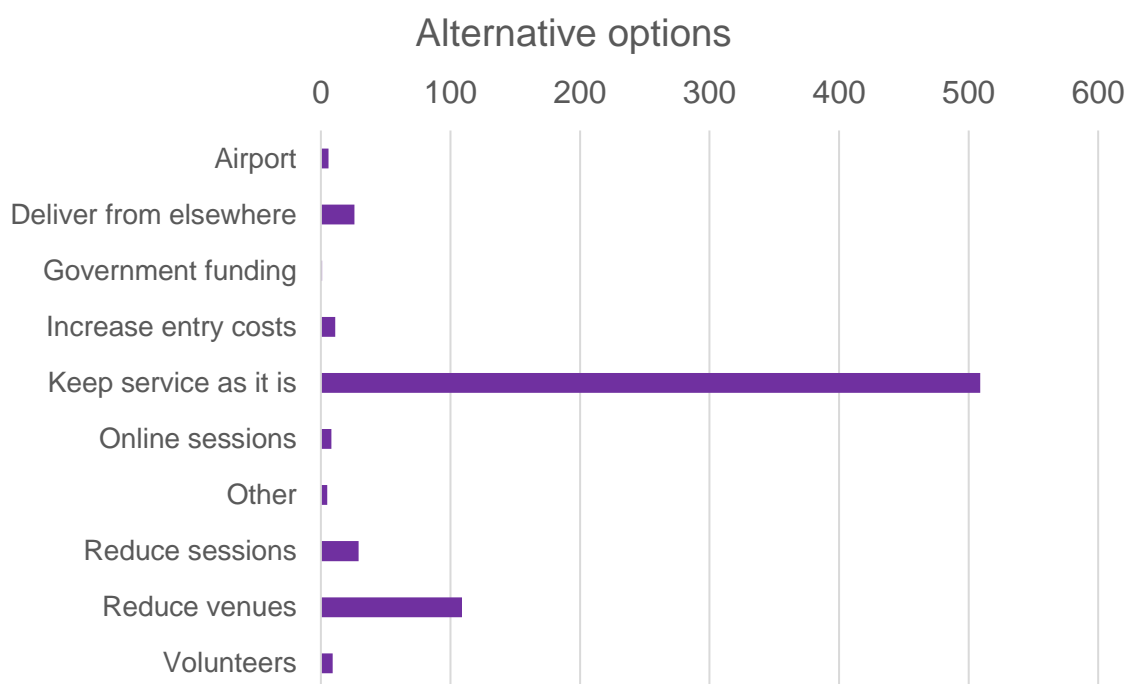
“Increase council tax”

“Sell the airport/stop investing in the airport”

10: Do you have any suggestions about the proposed changes to Luton children's centres for example alternative options, why the council should keep or consider closing a particular children’s centre or anything else you would like to add?

There were 713 responses to this part of the question.

Alternative options	Total	Percent
Airport	6	0.84%
Deliver from elsewhere	26	3.65%
Government funding	1	0.14%
Increase entry costs	11	1.54%
Keep service as it is	509	71.39%
Online sessions	8	1.12%
Other	5	0.70%
Reduce sessions	29	4.07%
Reduce venues	109	15.29%
Volunteers	9	1.26%





See below few examples of suggestions we had in response to this question:

“It would be great if they didn’t take the children’s centre services away completely and continued to have a reduced service. I believe the community needs this. Perhaps close the smaller centres with less capacity and focus on particular areas which would cover different neighbourhoods in the area”

“Scale down the amount of "universal services" delivered. Reduce the number of children’s centre delivery sites”

“Why not have a central location for a children's centre to run from with the same services and support on offer to all parents not just vulnerable parents. We all need help and support at times”

“I think you need 3 children’s centres left open (my wife thinks 4) but in any case they need to spread across the town to provide support where it is needed”

“Would like to see a minimum of four children’s centres left open to cover central, south, west and north Luton so families are able to access support, information and collect e.g. Healthy Start vitamins”

“Stopsley Baptist Church is such a hub in a good location for many in that area it would be a sore loss to those who use it”

“Some centres should be kept open, particularly those on the periphery of Luton where there is no easy access to the more central venues eg. Marsh Farm, Stopsley”

“As a bare minimum all Centres in deprived wards must remain open to serve the most disadvantaged children in Luton”

“The Mall children’s centre should be kept open that is in the heart of Luton and everyone can get into the centre to use this one”

“Hockwell Ring area is a socially deprived area with very few community resources to engage families. There is a need to keep some degree of universal service in place”

“Dallow Children's Centre is proposed to close which is madness as it sits in one of the poorest boroughs in Luton, East of England and indeed England”



11: Do you have any further comments that the council should consider?

There were 472 responses to this part of the question.

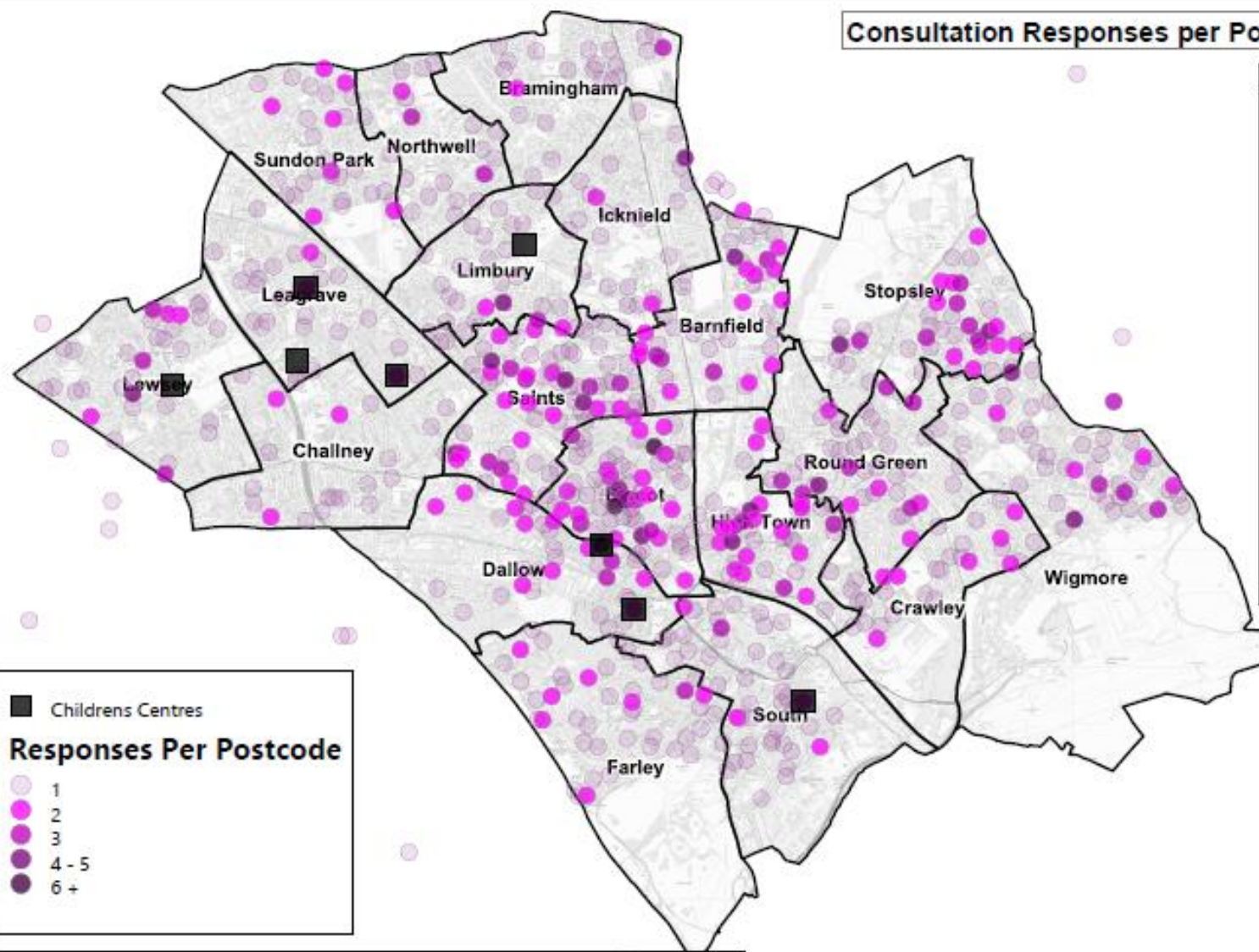
The majority of responses to this question clearly expressed a view that they valued the current services offered and did not wish to see the reduction in universal services delivered through Children's Centres.

12: What is your home postcode? This question will be used for analysis purposes only

There were 1114 responses to this part of the question.



Consultation Responses per Postcode in Luton



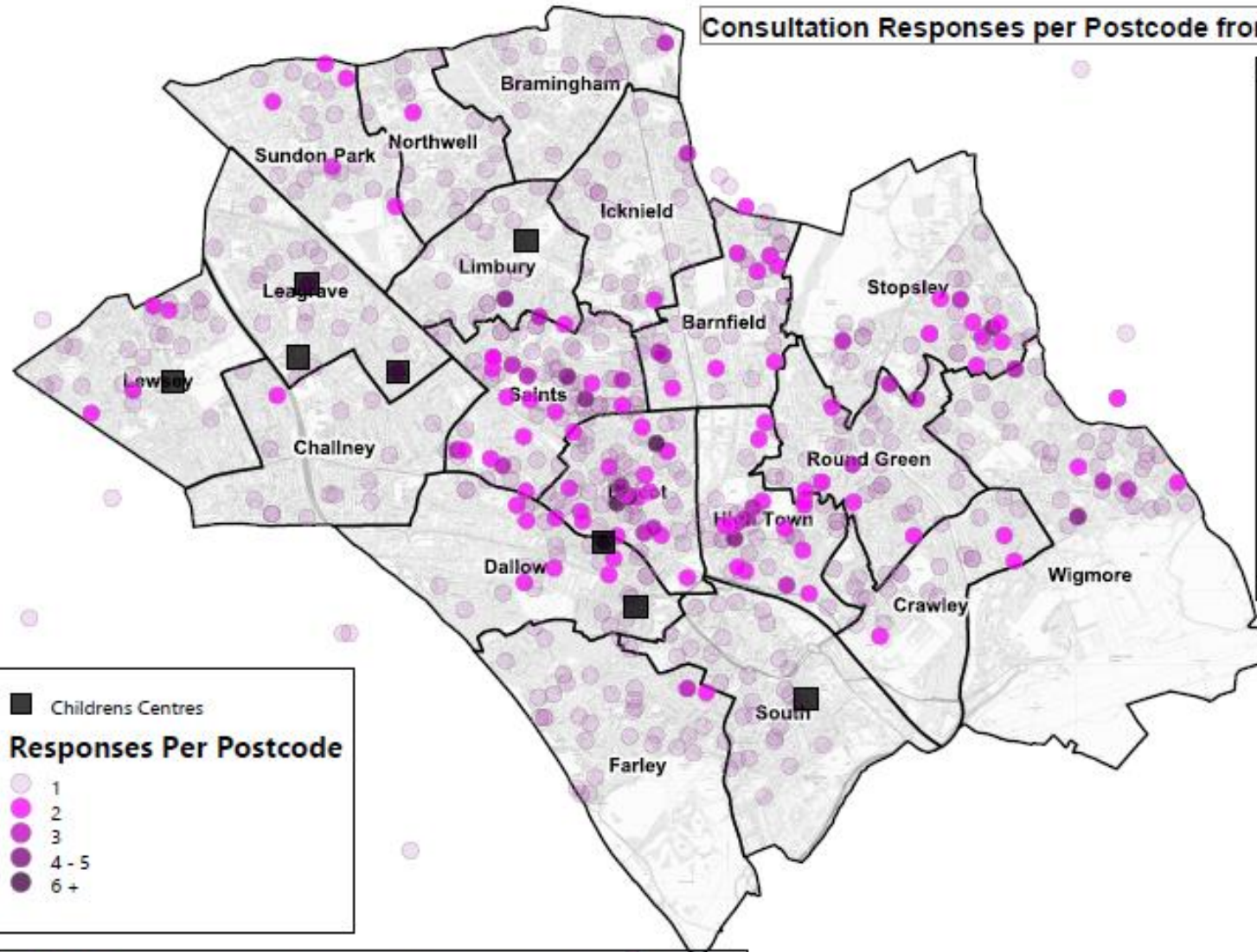
Area	Count
Barnfield	65
Biscot	122
Bramingham	25
Challney	22
Crawley	36
Dallow	57
Farley	51
High Town	69
Icknield	31
Leagrave	31
Lawsey	45
Limbury	30
Northwell	24
Round Green	65
Saints	116
South	54
Stopsley	69
Sundon Park	38
Wigmore	63
No Postcode	137
Unknown	26
Out of Luton	75
Grand Total	1251

Childrens Centres
Responses Per Postcode
 1
 2
 3
 4 - 5
 6 +





Consultation Responses per Postcode from Parents/Carers



Area	Count
Barnfield	50
Biscot	102
Bramingham	18
Challney	16
Crawley	27
Dallow	45
Farley	36
High Town	64
Icknield	27
Leagrave	23
Lewsey	32
Limbury	22
Northwell	17
Round Green	47
Saints	103
South	32
Stopsley	50
Sundon Park	28
Wigmore	49
No Postcode	64
Unknown	19
Out of Luton	35
Grand Total	906

■ Childrens Centres

Responses Per Postcode

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 +





13: What gender do you identify with?

There were 1171 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Male	90	7.19%
Female	1077	86.09%
Other	4	0.32%
Not Answered	80	6.39%

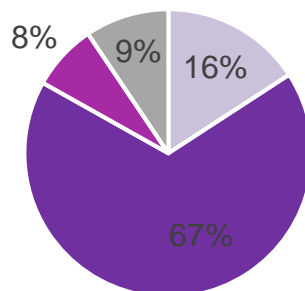
14: Are you currently expecting or have had a baby in the last six months?

There were 1133 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	198	15.83%
No	842	67.31%
Prefer not to say	93	7.43%
Not Answered	118	9.43%

Are you currently expecting or have had a baby in last six months?

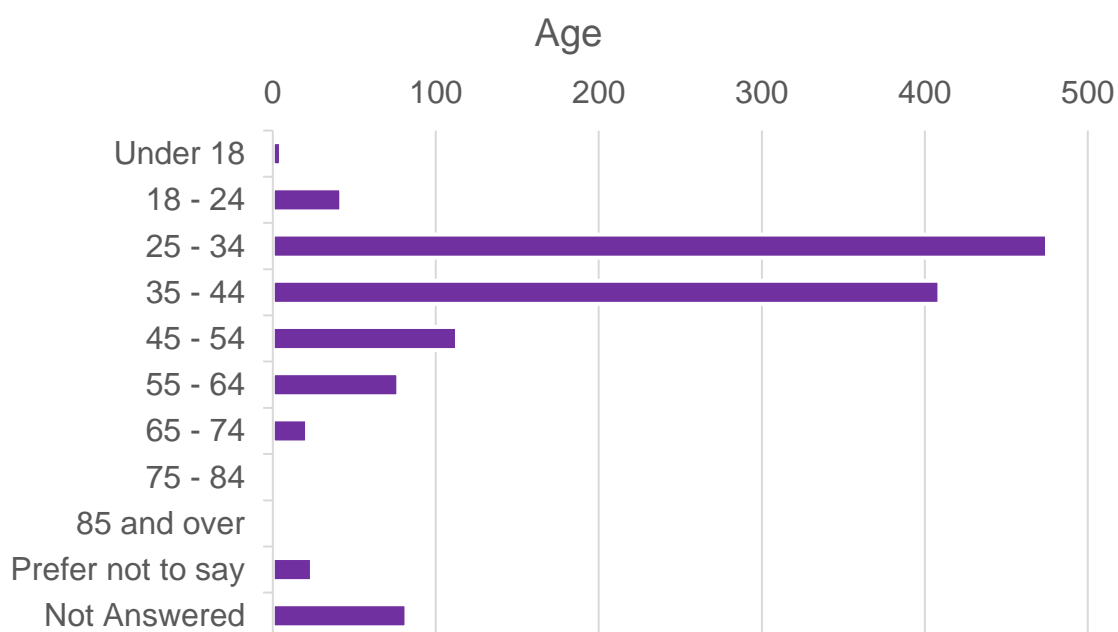
■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say ■ Not Answered



15: Which age group do you belong to?

There were 1169 responses to this part of the question. The majority of respondents are between the ages of 25-34 and 35-44.

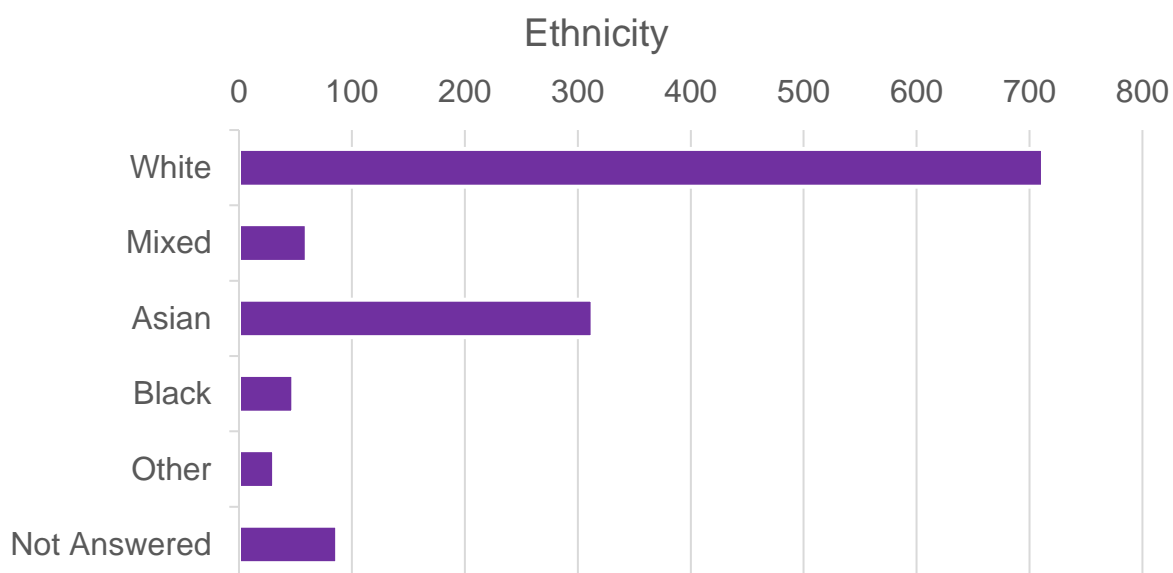
Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	5	0.40%
18 - 24	42	3.36%
25 - 34	475	37.97%
35 - 44	409	32.69%
45 - 54	113	9.03%
55 - 64	77	6.16%
65 - 74	21	1.68%
75 - 84	2	0.16%
85 and over	1	0.08%
Prefer not to say	24	1.92%
Not Answered	82	6.55%



16: Which of the following Ethnic groups best describes you?

There were 1164 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
White	712	56.91%
Mixed	60	4.80%
Asian	313	25.02%
Black	48	3.84%
Other	31	2.48%
Not Answered	87	6.95%



17: Do you have /or are have you been classed as having a disability?

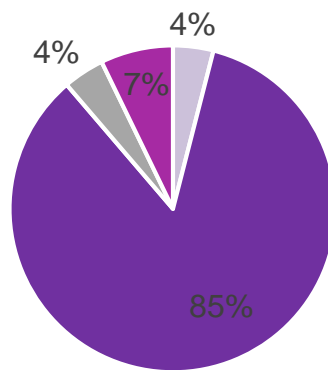
There were 1161 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	50	4.00%
No	1060	84.73%
Prefer not to say	51	4.08%
Not Answered	90	7.19%



Do you have/or are classed as having a disability?

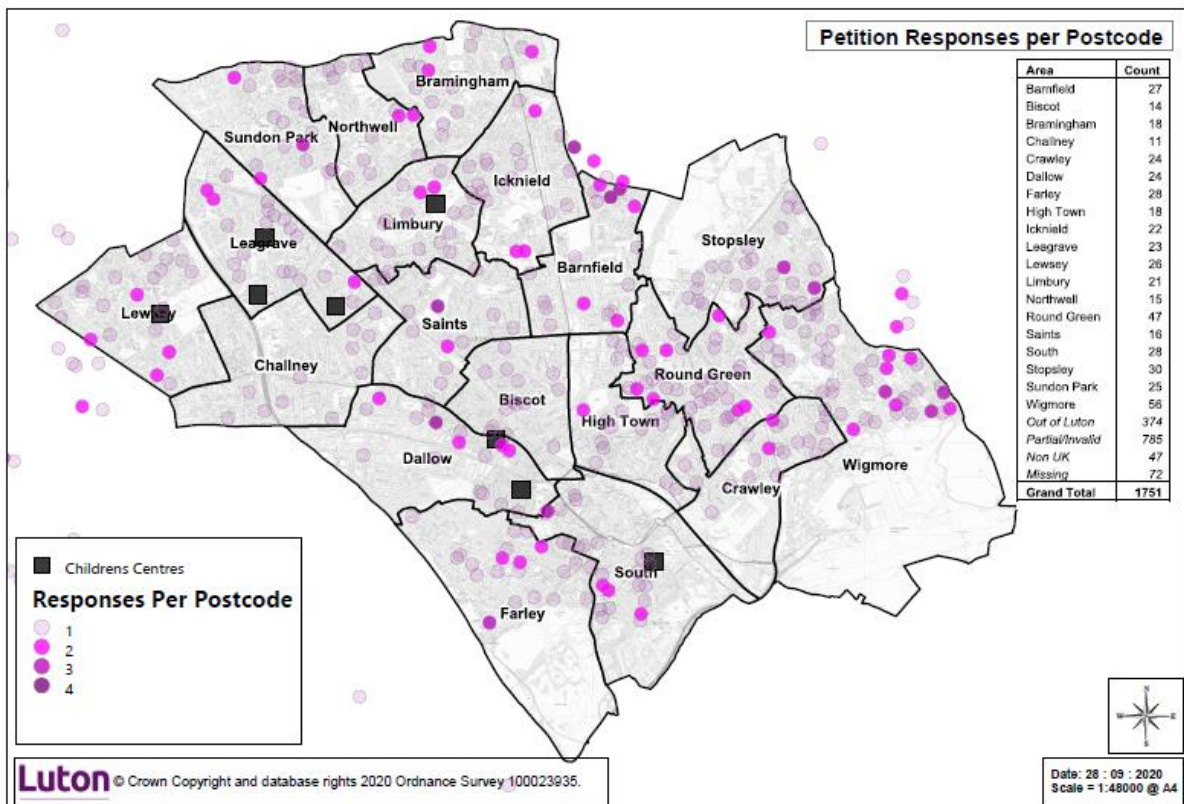
■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say ■ Not Answered



Save Flying start centres in Luton petition

A petition has also been received in addition to the consultation to save Luton's Children's Centres. The petition has 1755 signatures of people who do not want to have the children's centres closed in Luton. The petitioner has specifically requested that this petition be treated as a response to the consultation on the Children's Centres and as a petition for consideration by the Petitions and Representations Board at the meeting on the 5th October 2020.

The petitioner would like to see the alternative models the Council has explored and discounted in addition to this current proposal, and do not feel this consultation is not a true consultation as other councils including Buckinghamshire council provided several options for the public to consult on when they did consultations on their Children's Centres. Therefore, they would like to request a revised consultation with several different proposals which would be achievable and meet the statutory minimum budget reductions.





Additional representations

Several additional representation have been received these have all been reviewed, responded too and put forward for consideration as part of this consultation.

National Save Our Children's Centres Campaign includes local and national representatives

National Save Our Children's Centres Campaign wrote in support of the Children's Centres, the need to maintain the current level of service delivery and the importance of universal services for families in Luton. Local and national representatives also met with the Chief Executive to discuss their concerns.

"We are currently supporting families, parents and residents from the campaign group who are very worried and concerned about the potential closure of their children's centres in Luton as part of the public consultation review by Luton Council. They are concerned they will not be deemed vulnerable and will therefore lose out on the vital services they use and many will slip through the net. The Centres do incredibly valuable work with families; offering opportunities for parents and children to learn play, make friends and acquire new skills. The staff offer support, information, one to one work for parents facing difficulties with languages, domestic violence, housing and finances, first aid courses, breastfeeding support and advice and helping parents who may be suffering with post natal depression, anxiety and support with parenting skills. I am sure you will agree that it is amazing to see the depth of work children's centres carry out which is vital to the community. The centres offer a safe space."

A letter was received from the Chair of the Maternity Voices Partnership.

The MVP is a working partnership group that brings together service users, commissioners, and Health Care Professionals to develop perinatal services.

Key points for consideration requested:

- The Flying Start Children's Centres (FSCC) currently provide a range of services for parents and young people that continue to support their ongoing health and wellbeing. In collaboration with the midwifery and health visiting teams the centres host antenatal education classes for families Luton, which contribute to the NHS choice agenda and the NHSE&I Maternity Transformation Programme (MTP)
- FSCC's ensure that families have a safe, welcoming place to meet other new parents, reducing isolation.
- Children's centre keyworkers are able to identify and signpost too many of the other services e.g. Foodbank, debt management advice, housing etc.
- FSCC's staff support, among other things, breastfeeding, child development and school readiness, obesity, oral health and nutrition priorities and improve health outcomes for children and mothers.



- The Children's Centre staff have close community relationships that enable them to identify families in need of early intervention and are able to refer for support quickly.
- Early intervention is key for achieving the best outcomes in all aspects of health and development – this is what the Flying Start Children's Centres offer. We ask that any decision to close them is reconsidered.

Quotes from parents on the MVP highlighted in the letter:

“The children's centres change lives. They are there for women during the antenatal and post-natal period. They offer a shoulder to cry on, a place of safety and local support that you cannot get anywhere else. The staff know these women, they build a rapport with them and most of all – they protect them. They spot things so much more quickly than many help professionals would because they have a relationship with them, and their children. Well mothers mean well children.”

“Children are the future of this town and we should be investing in them and their well-being, not taking services away. Families have suffered enough during these last few months and one of the things that has kept many parents going – is knowing they will be able to get back to the children's centres and have that gold standard of support again. Our local mothers and children are a pillar of the community – and we should be looking at more ways to help them, not leaving them without this crucial service.”

Email received from Dr Mohammad Alramahi who is a Parent Governor Representative on the Children's Scrutiny Board

There are two points that Dr Alramahi would like put forward on behalf of the six Maintained Nursery Schools in Luton to be considered as part of the consultation:






1. Three of the Nursery Schools currently receive funding as they have been used as part of the Children's Centre offer (e.g. Stay & Play sessions, Baby Groups, Baby Massage etc.). If they lose the CC funding this will put the Nursery Schools in further financial hardship (2 of the schools receive a significant amount and the loss will be difficult to manage).
2. It has been suggested that - going forward - if the CCs are not able to offer any Universal Services for parents and young children, the Nursery Schools may be able to offer some services. The Nursery Schools feel that this could be a successful joint offer - but it would definitely need to be provided with the necessary funding, as there is no additional capacity within the schools.



Conclusion

In conclusion, we have carried out an extensive public consultation that was available for a six-week period and included five online public meetings. The consultation has received 1251 responses, which have been overwhelmingly negative towards any change in service provisions. We received a number of suggestions for ways to make the savings and an alternative delivery models outlined in this report.

Appendices

<u>Appendix</u>	<u>Document</u>	<u>Attachment</u>
A	All consultation responses – Luton Map	 All consultation responses - Luton M
B	Parent/Carer consultation responses – Luton Map	 Consultation responses from Pare
C	Save Flying Start Centres in Luton Petition – Luton Map	 Responses from Petition - Luton Maç
D	Question 9: full list of responses	 Question 9 - Full list of responses.do
E	Question 10: full list of responses	 Question 10 - Full list of responses.do