

# APPENDIX 2

## Our Response to the Family Support Service Consultation

Somerset County Council would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Family Support Service consultation. Nearly 850 people took part in the consultation, with 488 responding via the consultation questionnaire; it has provided vital information which will help to develop services in Somerset and inform those making decisions. Some of your suggestions will be used directly in the development of the Family Support Service. Some of the information you gave us may not be in scope of the Family Support Service at this time, however we will use it to shape future service developments and community engagement.

Below we have summarised the most common comments made through the consultation and responded to them, grouping them under the key themes of integration, focussing spend on services not buildings, and the use of technology and online information.

In addition we have responded to some of the issues you raised about your local area.

### 1. Integration

Summary- Integration was seen as a good thing. Respondents liked the idea of 'one service' and only having to register once.

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our Response</b>
You wanted to know how services would be joined up	We are planning to integrate our public health nursing service (Health Visiting and School Nursing) with existing getset service (which includes our children's centre and family support services). Whilst they have been separate teams that worked closely we now wish to fully integrate them into one team. This provides an opportunity to maintain the unique skills of health and family support professionals, whilst delivering more seamless services for families, children and young people (from 0-19 (and up to 25 years for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities).
You wanted more clarity on the model and how this will achieve savings.	Running separate services with similar approaches and objectives supporting similar groups of people does not make sense. We know there is duplication and overlap of some activities and processes which can be confusing for families and costs more than it should. Having one service can increase efficiency e.g. teams will no longer have to refer families to each other which they do now. We can save money by co-locating staff in a smaller number of buildings, and reduce management and

	<p>support services costs.</p> <p>It's well-known that councils have less money. We want to reduce spending on running buildings so that we can invest in the services and support.</p>
<p>Why is the Council not being more ambitious and integrating more services than just Public Health Nursing and getset?</p>	<p>The intention has always been for greater integration across more support services in the long-term; this is just the first phase.</p> <p>However it is important we get this part right, before we integrate more services in the future, following further consultation with partners, families and professionals.</p>
<p>You would be happy if your information was shared between professionals, not just children's centres but with GPs as well.</p>	<p>Confidentiality is an important principle that makes people feel safe in sharing their concerns and asking for help. Likewise, information sharing can be beneficial for families in improving the support they receive (e.g. only telling your story once). However, information sharing is subject to a number of pieces of legislation and in most cases requires your consent. This will not change with the development of integrated services.</p>
<p>You wanted to choose who your information was shared with.</p>	

## **2. Investing in services not buildings**

*Summary- It was clear that people valued the services they had received, which in some cases had been nothing short of life changing, and are looking for some assurance that these services will continue and be improved. Some respondents expressed a lack of trust in the council, perceiving de-designation of some children's centre buildings as a loss of vital services.*

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our response</b>
<p>What works best is long term stable support and advice.</p>	<p>We agree and believe that having an integrated service which provides services for families with children from 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND) will improve consistency so families can access support if and when they feel they need it.</p>
<p>Having a building is a sign of reassurance of the Council's commitment to deliver services.</p>	<p>We understand that people associate buildings with services. However, we can reassure you that the changed status of buildings in the proposals would not mean a reduction in the service. A reduction in the buildings funded and maintained by the council would not reduce services available.</p>

	<p>Regular support and activities are already being delivered in more than 100 locations across the county, the majority of them outside children’s centres. This would continue and we would look to develop this in response to the local need.</p> <p>All the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support – will continue in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>Without the overheads of maintaining buildings we can be more flexible in the services we provide across all communities, not just those that currently have a children’s centre building in them.</p> <p>The de-designation of a children’s centre means that the building can be used more flexibly, and offer support to older children, above 5 years of age. We are committed to the buildings still being used to support children, young people and families, where a need exists. For example in areas where there is a shortage of nursery and school places the buildings can be used to extend early education and school provision. We know also that these buildings were designed with younger children in mind; the new plans will allow us to think about how we support families with older children.</p> <p>We have seen a decline in families using buildings with drop-in, open access from 9am to 5pm just for one service, preferring instead to come in when there are planned groups or activities underway.</p> <p>South Somerset, Mendip, Taunton and West Somerset District Councils have offered support in considering how we join up open access family and community support which could be shared across a number of services and therefore share costs. We will be following this up during 2018.</p>
<p>Unfit venues show a lack of value in parents.</p>	<p>We value the hard work of parents. It is essential that the venues we use are comfortable, welcoming, appropriate and safe. We want to find the most appropriate and accessible delivery points. This may be in your own home or you may choose to access our services in community venues.</p> <p>We want to also (in your words) ‘think outside the box’ and take advantage of the wonderful natural landscape Somerset offers e.g. beaches, forests and fields.</p>

<p>Staff and parents are happy to help in finding venues.</p>	<p>This is fantastic news and we would like to take you up on the offer. We know that you know your community better than we do. If the offer still stands please contact: <a href="mailto:FamilySupportService@somerset.gov.uk">FamilySupportService@somerset.gov.uk</a> You could also join one of the Early Help Area Advisory Boards that support early help activity across Somerset.</p>
<p>You would like to see more services, particularly for younger children, and for those services to be accessible by foot (and buggy).</p>	<p>The Family Support Service will work in conjunction with other local services, voluntary groups, parent groups and organisations working with families. This rich picture provides families with choice and it is important that local groups, independent of the county council, are encouraged and enabled to develop in response to identified local need.</p>

### **3. Making use of technology**

*Summary- A high proportion of parents have internet access these days. In fact you told us that 94% of respondents in Somerset have a mobile phone and 88% have internet access.*

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our response</b>
<p>Parents are willing to use the internet to find how they can access services and what is on in their local area.</p>	<p>We understand it is important to have up to date on-line information about services and we will ensure this information is available through Somerset Choices.</p>
<p>Parents are keen to have an on-line social media forum which provides good quality advice on parenting e.g. facilitated by the health visiting service.</p>	<p>This is a great idea and we have started to have more of a social media presence with some of our existing services. Taking the information you have given us we plan to build upon this.</p>
<p>You preferred to have individual interventions or consultations delivered face to face and not on-line. However some people said that telephone support is often welcomed.</p>	<p>We will not replace face-to-face support with online interventions for families, and we will ensure that telephone support is also available.  We do know however, that certain groups (such as young people) do like on-line resources and evidence-based online “apps” have proved successful in other areas.</p>

## What did you say about your local area?

People raised the following issues specific to their district of Somerset.

### **Sedgemoor**

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our response</b>
Travelling across Bridgwater is challenging and having support locally is important.	<p>The changed status of buildings in the proposals would not mean a reduction in service.</p> <p>A reduction in buildings funded and maintained by the council would not reduce the services available.</p> <p>There are more than 80 regular support services and activities being delivered in from more than 40 locations in Sedgemoor, including many in Bridgwater. This would continue and we would look to develop this in response to the local need.</p> <p>As well as this, all the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support – will continue in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>We expect to see this develop and grow in response to the changing needs of the local communities.</p>
Some parents do not know about services going on in their area.	<p>We will maintain up to date information on-line via Somerset Choices and ensure all our staff and families know how to access it so it can be shared far and wide. Whatever proposals are taken forward, nothing would happen immediately and we will be ensuring that the current services can continue uninterrupted, seeking suitable alternative venues where needed.</p>
The range of provision is too small and the proposals will reduce it further.	<p>There is no intention to reduce the support and services available.</p> <p>The regular services and activities being delivered from more than 40 locations would continue, as would all the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support – will continue in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>We expect to see this develop and grow in response to the changing needs of the local communities.</p> <p>We will provide information about what is available across the area, and this will be continually reviewed</p>

	with the local Early Help Advisory Board to ensure local needs are met as far as possible. Our aim is not to reduce support but to ensure there is a more co-ordinated approach across public, private, voluntary and community activities that meets family needs.
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## Taunton Deane

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our response</b>
<p>The loss of a buildings in Wellington and Bishops Lydeard is a concern as the buildings are viewed as part of the community and essential to forging local links</p>	<p>A number of universal and targeted groups are established in Wellington and Bishops Lydeard and these will continue according to needs of local children and families.</p> <p>We have met with Wellington Town Council and are keen to explore with them and other partners possible venues for early childhood services and support in Wellington.</p> <p>Discussions with Bishops Lydeard Village Hall Committee have taken place and they are exploring how the building could be used for the wider community, potentially with improved nursery provision to meet SCC’s statutory duty for early years.</p> <p>Whatever proposals are taken forward, nothing would happen immediately and we will be ensuring that the current services can continue uninterrupted, seeking suitable alternative venues where needed.</p>
<p>The proposals for Taunton Deane appear to be designed around existing buildings rather than local need.</p>	<p>All the proposals are based on local need data and information, and we are keen to ensure we fully utilise council buildings for flexibility than rent other buildings.</p> <p>We would also consider other community venues. There are nearly 60 regular support services and activities being delivered from more than 20 locations in Taunton Deane and this would continue, as well as the all the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support –in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>We expect to see this develop and grow in response to the changing needs of the local communities.</p>
<p>Other groups utilise children’s centre buildings e.g. child</p>	<p>These groups should continue to run, either in the existing locations or in new delivery points.</p>

<p>minders and parent run groups. What will happen to these groups?</p>	<p>Whatever proposals are taken forward, nothing would happen immediately and we will be ensuring that the current services can continue uninterrupted, seeking suitable alternative venues where needed.</p>
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## West Somerset

<b>You said</b>	<b>Our response</b>
<p>Travelling across the district is difficult.</p>	<p>We understand this is an issue in rural areas. One of the main ideas behind the proposals is making services easier to access and that families will not need to travel to receive a service.</p> <p>There are around 50 regular support services and activities being delivered from nearly 30 locations in West Somerset and this would continue, as well as the all the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support – in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>We expect to see this develop and grow in response to the changing needs of the local communities.</p>
<p>Existing centres where co-location happens is seen to have a positive impact.</p>	<p>This is good feedback and a key aim of this programme so we can co-locate as many staff as possible.</p>
<p>Alcombe Children's Centre is big enough to accommodate many different services and is located near the supermarkets where the majority of the residents in West Somerset do their food shopping. Families would therefore not necessarily have to make a separate journey to access our services as they would have to in Williton.</p>	<p>We do not expect families from Minehead to travel to Williton to access services. There is and will continue to be a range of support delivered in Minehead.</p> <p>The Alcombe Centre is owned by West Somerset Council (WSC) and leased by the County Council. In recognition of the feedback both Somerset County Council (SCC) and West Somerset Council (WSC) are committed to supporting integrated family support services at the Alcombe Centre. Working with partners we would like to extend early childhood and other community services where appropriate. Proposals are currently being jointly explored and the local community and other stakeholders will be kept informed of developments.</p>

## South Somerset

You said	Our response
<p>There is dissatisfaction with a reduction of centres over such a large district. Particular concern was raised about increasing poverty in Chard and parts of Yeovil.</p>	<p>We understand that people associate buildings with services. However, we can reassure you that the changed status of buildings in the proposals would not mean a reduction in service. A reduction in buildings funded and maintained by the council would not reduce the services available. There are more than 60 regular services and activities being delivered from nearly 30 locations in South Somerset.</p> <p>This would continue and we would look to develop this in response to the local need.</p> <p>All the universal and targeted support – such as Health Visitor support – will continue in community venues and people’s homes.</p> <p>Yeovil and Chard are among the areas highlighted by the consultation as needing work and planning.</p> <p>A number of universal and targeted groups are established in Chard and these will continue according to needs of local children and families. During 2018/19 we will explore the use of other more appropriate venues in Chard. Similarly in Yeovil there are a number of venues and organisations offering support services now.</p> <p>We agree there is more work to do. We will work with partners including South Somerset District Council to explore how we could join up the Family Support Service with other open access support, which could be shared across a number of services.</p>
<p>Existing services do not sufficiently address the needs of the villages and rural areas and it is hoped this is addressed in new proposals.</p>	<p>One of the key aims of the proposals is to make it easier for people to access the support they need, especially those who need it most.</p> <p>There are more than 60 regular services and activities being delivered from nearly 30 locations in South Somerset and we will be looking to develop this. Having services that are not dictated by the buildings means we can be more flexible in the way we deliver services particularly in rural communities that may not have an existing children’s centre.</p>



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## Mendip

You said	Our response
<p>There are concerns that no family hub building in Shepton Mallet will mean fewer services in this area.</p>	<p>The changing status of buildings does not mean a reduction in services and support and we will be looking in more detail at the area and the community venues that are available.</p> <p>Mendip District Council has expressed an interest in exploring how we can join up the Family Support Service with other open access support, which could be shared across a number of services. Staff from all services are currently based in Shepton Mallet and deliver universal and targeted groups in the town.</p> <p>Work is currently underway and due to complete in 2018 for the Family Support Service to use Highfield House within “Shape Mendip” hub, essentially replicating what was offered in the House Children’s Centre previously.</p>