

# Consultation on proposed changes to Children's Centres in Thurrock

## What we are consulting on:

- Changes to the services offered in Children's Centres.
- Proposals to change the management of 4 Centres across Thurrock
- The closure or change of use of 6 centres across Thurrock

## Why are we proposing these changes?

Thurrock Children's Centres are funded by grants from Central Government, and as a result of national changes to these grants Thurrock Council now face a significant reduction in the funding available. In view of these changes we will have to make some difficult yet necessary decisions about future spending and this consultation seeks your views on our proposal to reduce costs.

The changes to funding for children's services nationally mean that Thurrock Council has a smaller budget to run its Children's Centres, as the Council also face other financial challenges it will need to consider different ways of running the Children's Centres in order to protect the services offered within them. We have already reduced management and administration costs across the centres to better protect the service available.

This can only be achieved by reducing general running costs and adopting a new pattern of services. The fact that fewer resources are available will not diminish the level of concern the Council has to ensure that services for the most vulnerable families are targeted to the areas where they will be most effective.

The Council wishes to consult on proposals about how we achieve budget savings affecting the Children's Centres and would like your views on the way Children's Centres are used, organised and operated. The three proposals will involve:

- Focussing funding at Children's Centres in areas of greatest need
- Operating a combination of commissioned, independent and council funded centres
- Maintaining fewer Children's Centres offering a full range of services
- Sharing management arrangements across Children's Centres
- Further reductions in management and administration costs

## **About the consultation**

This consultation seeks to inform the public and seek their views on changes to the delivery of Children's Centres in Thurrock. Throughout the development of Children's centres, community consultation has sought to inform and support our planning and this approach will be continued. In addition there is a statutory requirement to consult before making significant changes.

A range of methods will be used to ensure differing needs are taken into account, to ensure some specific audiences particularly those seldom heard are consulted and to encourage participation.

## **Timescale**

- The consultation opened on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011.

## Part One

### Changes to the services offered in Children's Centres.

Some families will, at times, need additional support. To provide this we will have to reduce funding to some other services, we hope to limit the impact of these reductions by signposting to other services already available and by seeking better value from the services we continue to offer.

We are currently reviewing the services offered and we are proposing to:

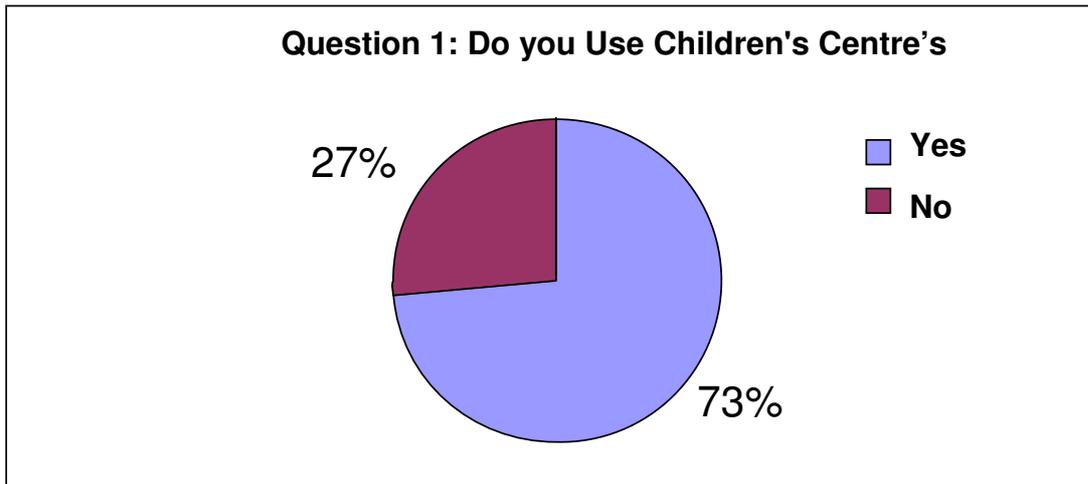
- Make changes to our outreach programme to provide a greater emphasis on supporting families who need additional support.
- Increase the services we offer to provide additional support to families that are experiencing particular difficulties by reducing some of the more general groups we offer
- Offer intensive structured parenting support through a range of programmes such as outreach and home visiting.
- Provide access to specialist services such as counselling, family therapy and services to safeguard children from harm and neglect.

Many of the Children's Centres in the Borough work in partnership with private and voluntary organisations to offer early education and childcare for children aged 0-5 years; in addition some centres also offer access to afterschool care for children aged 5-11 years. There are no plans to change these where they are offered by private or voluntary organisations.

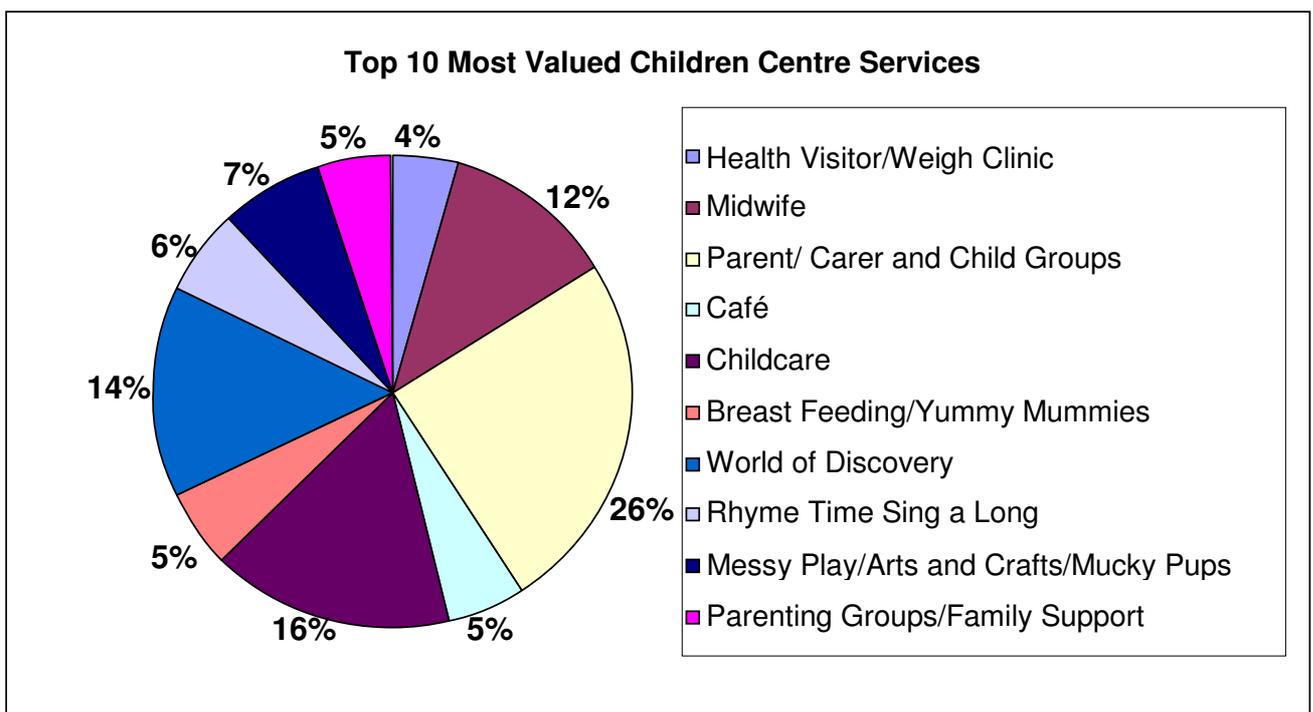
Examples of the services currently offered are:

- Child and family health provision e.g. breastfeeding support.
- Parent and toddler groups.
- Midwifery appointments.
- Stop smoking sessions.
- Parenting support.

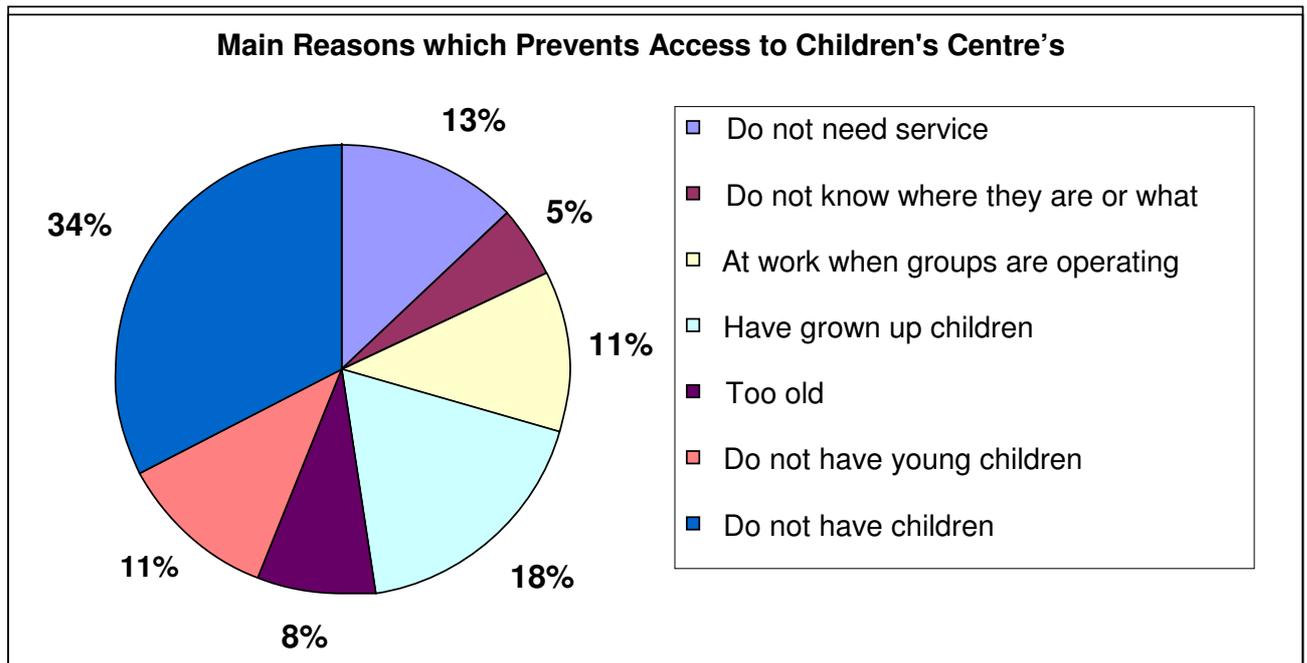
**Question 1: Do you use Children Centres?**



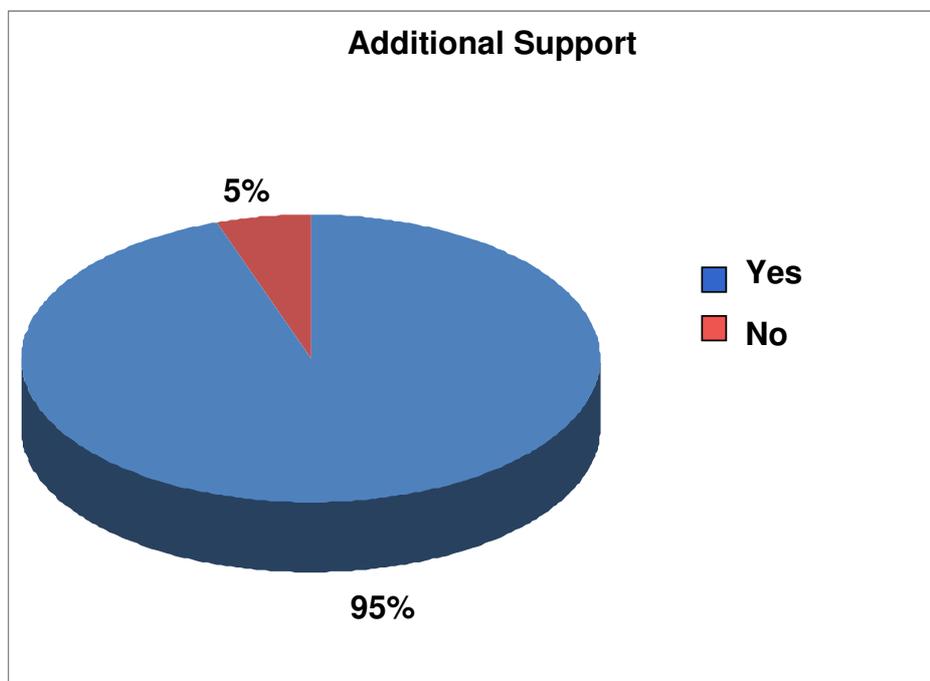
**2. If yes, what services in Children's Centres do you use and value the most? Please give details**



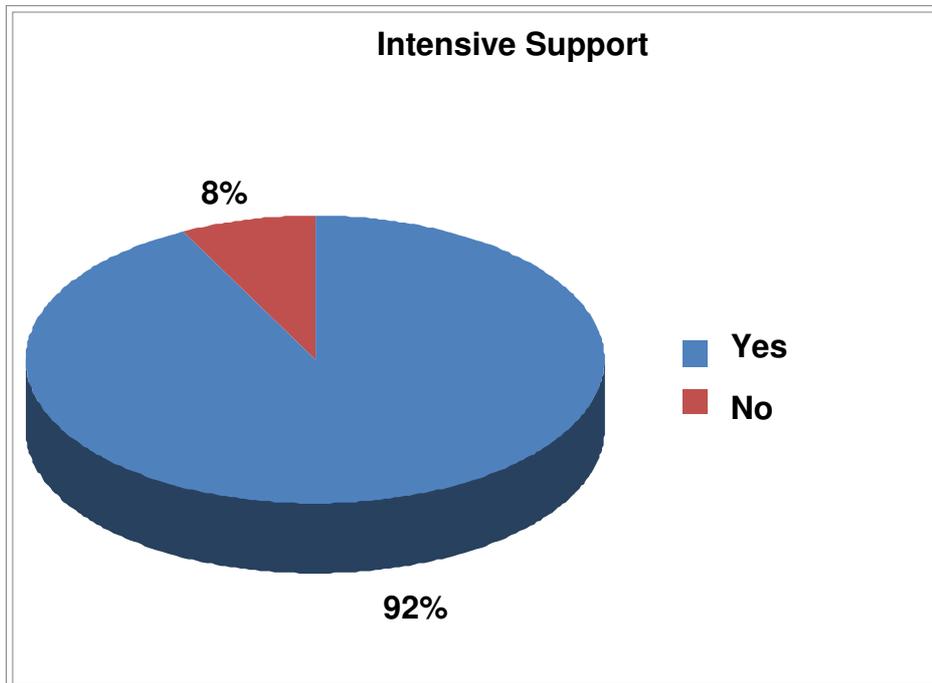
**3. If no, is there a reason that prevents you from using a Children's Centre?  
Please give details**



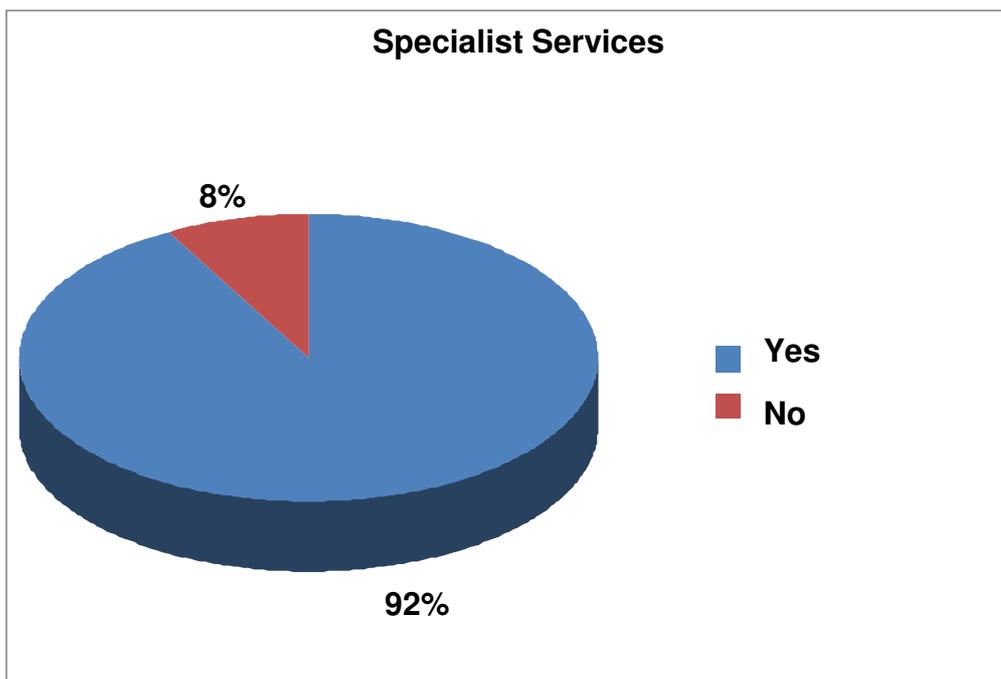
**4. Do you agree with the need to provide services for families who need additional support?**



**5. Do you think parents would find it helpful if Children's Centres offered intensive structured parenting support through a range of programmes and home visiting?**



**6. Would you find it helpful if Children's Centres provided access to specialist services such as counselling, family therapy and services to safeguard children and support parents/carers?**



## Part Two

### Proposal to change the management of 4 centres across Thurrock

All Children's Centres in Thurrock are currently managed by Thurrock Council. We believe that a better range of services and better value for money can be achieved by supporting other providers from the voluntary and private sector or schools to run four of our Children's Centres.

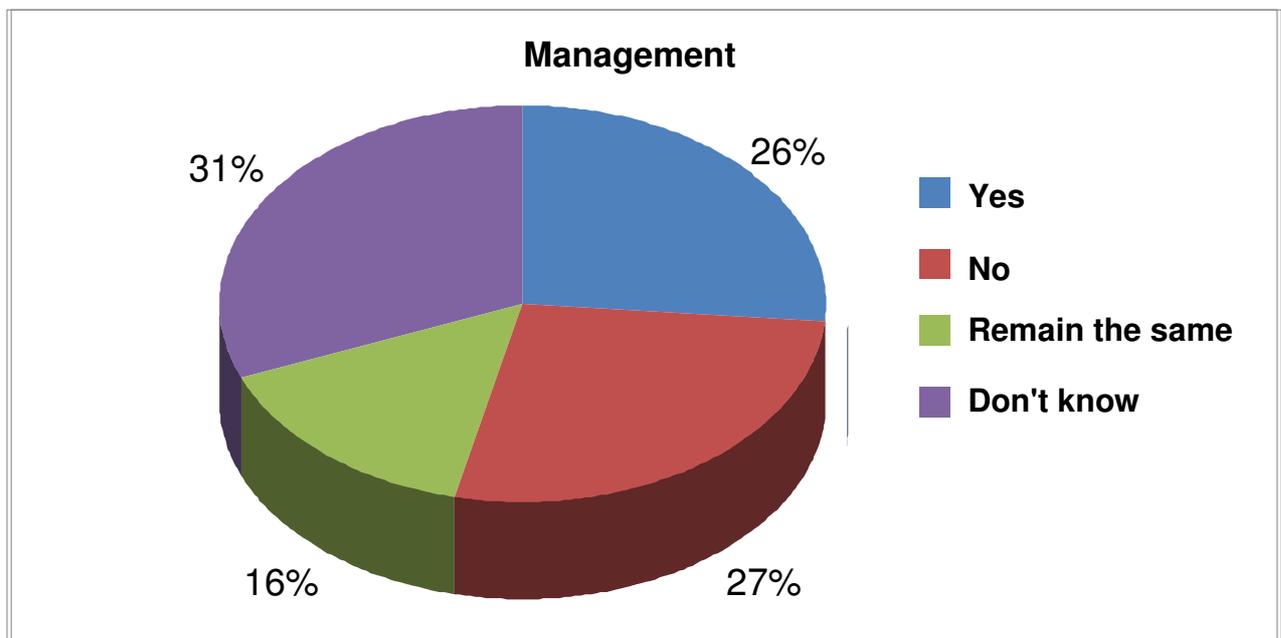
This way of managing Children's Centres is being used successfully across the Country and in many cases local parents are included in management committees.

We are proposing to change the management of four centres across the Borough. The services offered will cover the following:

- Family support
- Health advice services such as midwifery and advice
- Parenting support
- Information and advice such as where to access services, Job Centre Plus and in some centres access to Citizens Advice Bureau support.

Any organisation wishing to manage a Children's Centre will have to have proven experience of offering such services and will need to ensure the local community are involved in the advisory boards of the centres.

### 7. Do you feel the proposal to change the management of four centres across Thurrock will improve the range of services and the access to them?



## Part 3

### The closure or change of use of 6 centres across Thurrock

Thurrock Council manages 15 Sure Start Children's Centres, due to the reduction in public money the council wants to understand your views on ensuring high quality services remain throughout the centres.

Children's centres within the borough of Thurrock operate to a model of main centres (hub centres) and linked smaller ones (satellite centres). The proposal is to close some smaller centres and provide opportunities for improving the services in the main centres, while looking at alternative venues (e.g. schools and health centres) to ensure access to services for all our communities across the borough.

The main centres in Thurrock are currently spread across the Borough; the larger centres in each area are as follows:

- Aveley
- Ockendon
- Thameside
- Tilbury
- Stanford Le Hope
- East Tilbury
- South Stifford

All of these have early education or childcare provided on site alongside a range of other services.

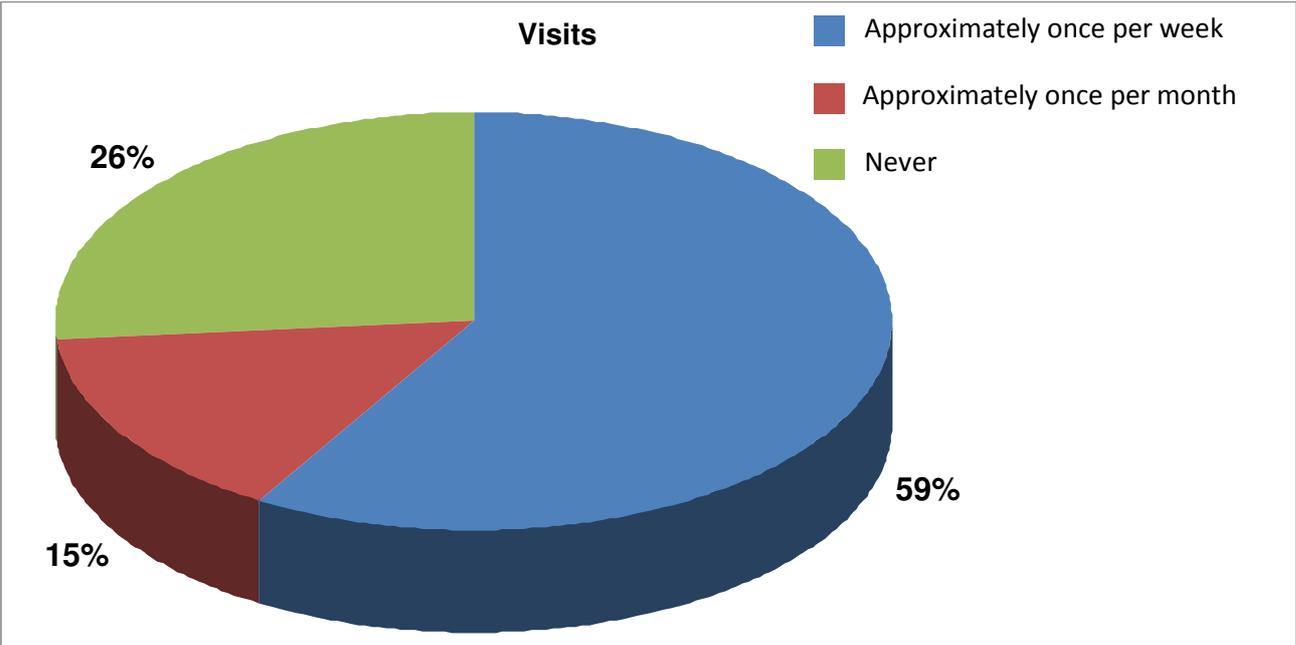
In addition, we also have the following centres:

- Purfleet
- West Thurrock
- Chafford Hundred
- Grays Town
- Blackshots (not currently open)
- Abbots Hall (Homesteads Preschool on site)
- Horndon (Horndon Preschool on site)
- Chadwell St Mary
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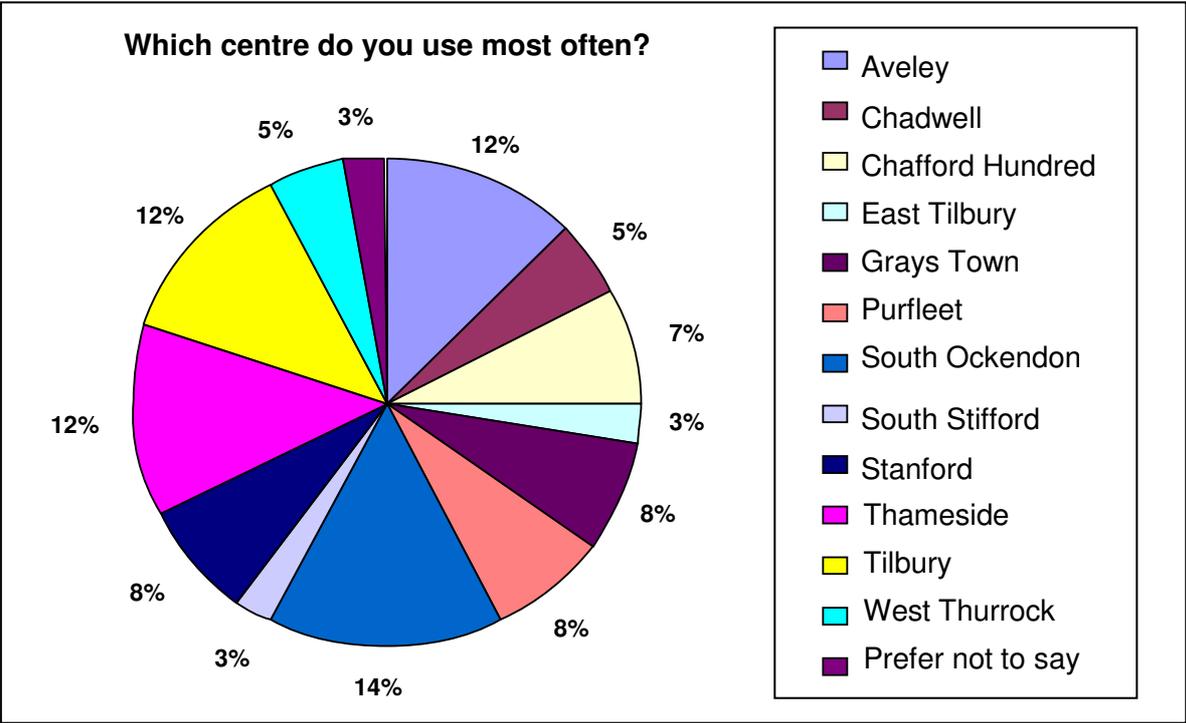
The proposal to close six and change the management arrangements of four will mean that we retain nine centres in the Borough.

Where early education and childcare is offered by a private or voluntary provider there are no plans to change this. In Tilbury however the early education and childcare is provided by Thurrock Council and this is subject to a separate consultation which will be held with parents using this facility.

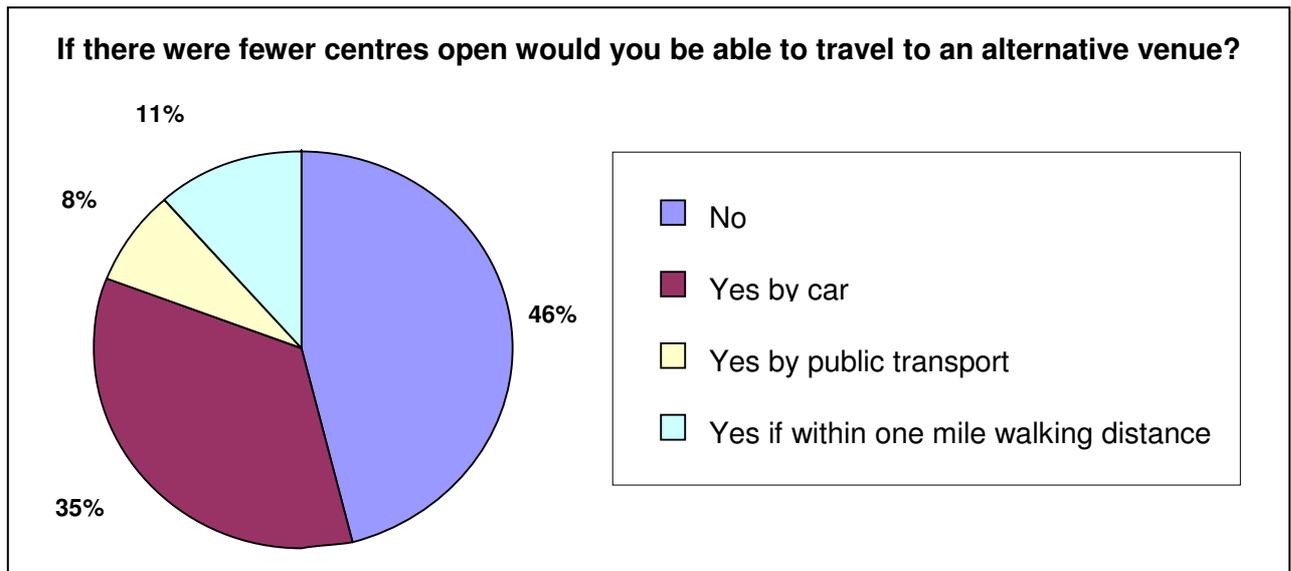
8. How often do you visit a Children’s Centre?



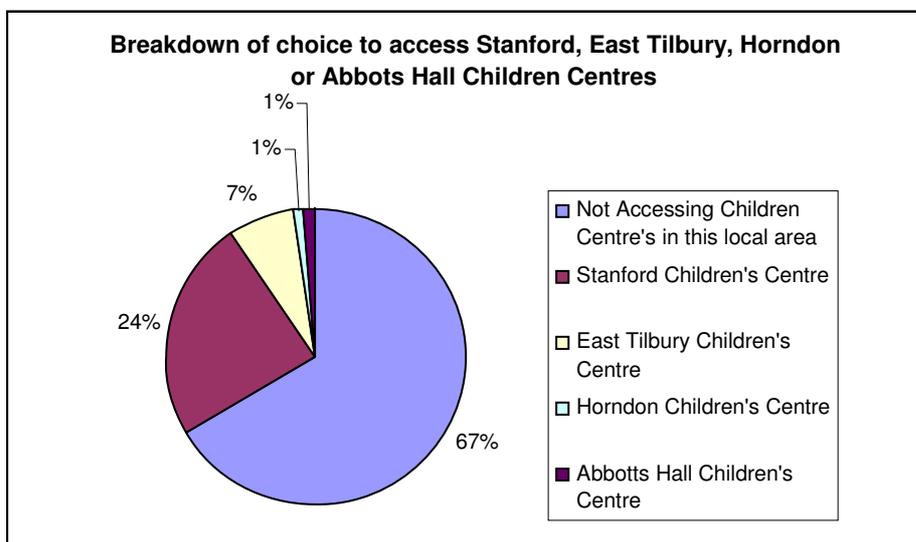
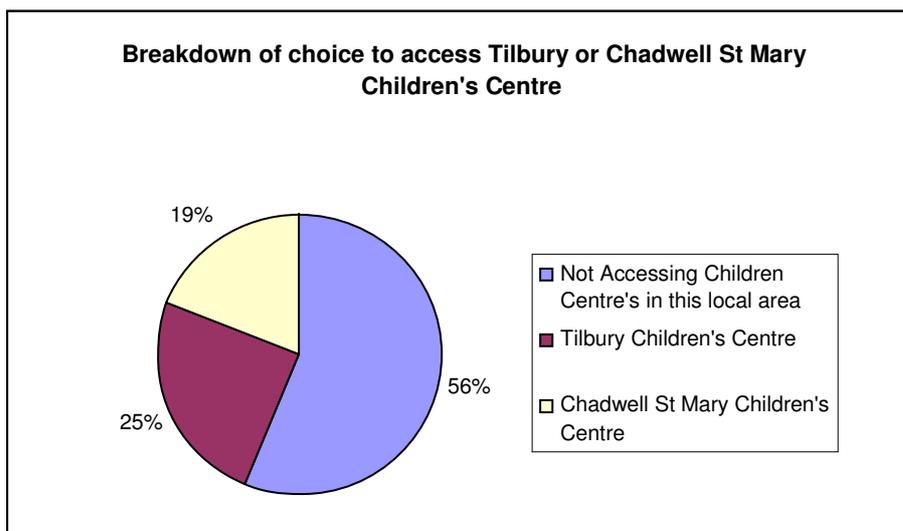
9. Which centre do you use most often?

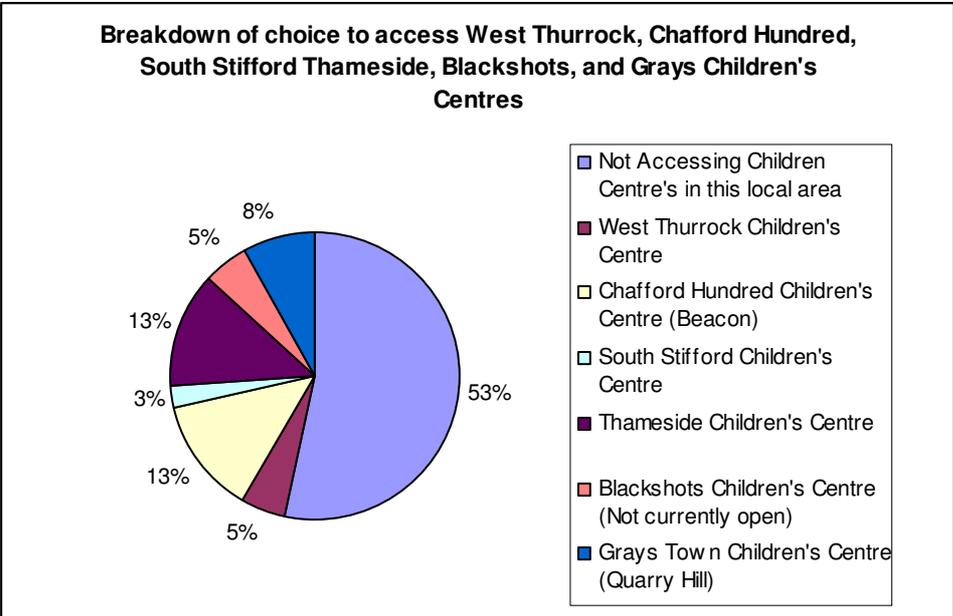
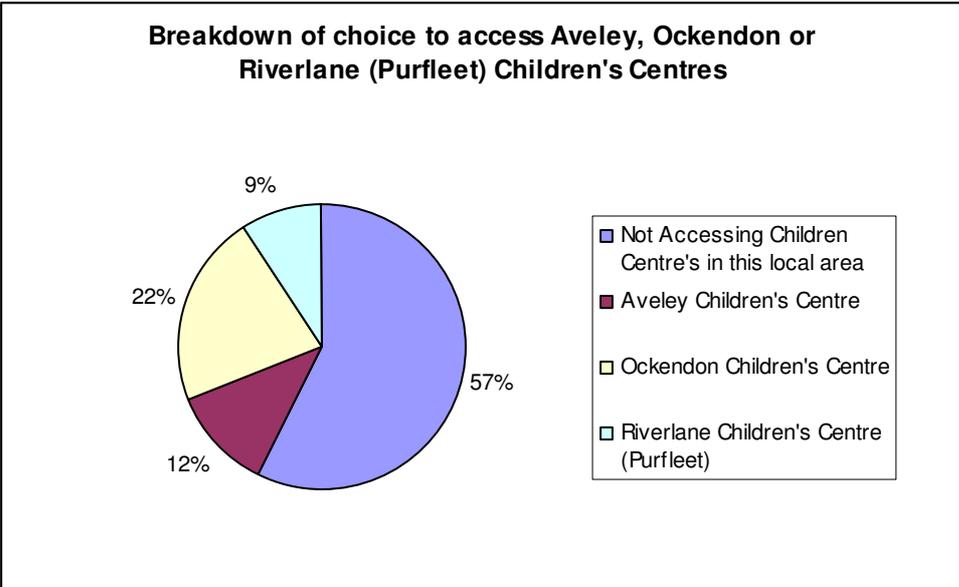


**10. If there were fewer centres open would you be able to travel to an alternative venue?**

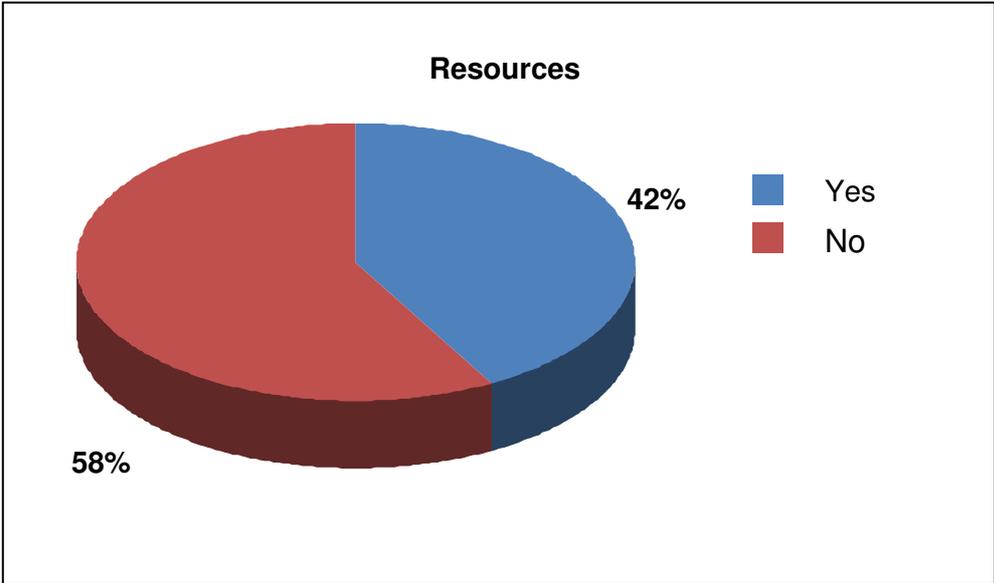


**Q11. If we kept at least one centre in each area, please tell us the name of the centre you would be most likely to use?**





**Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to focus resources on fewer centres to allow us to develop services for families who need additional support?**



## About you

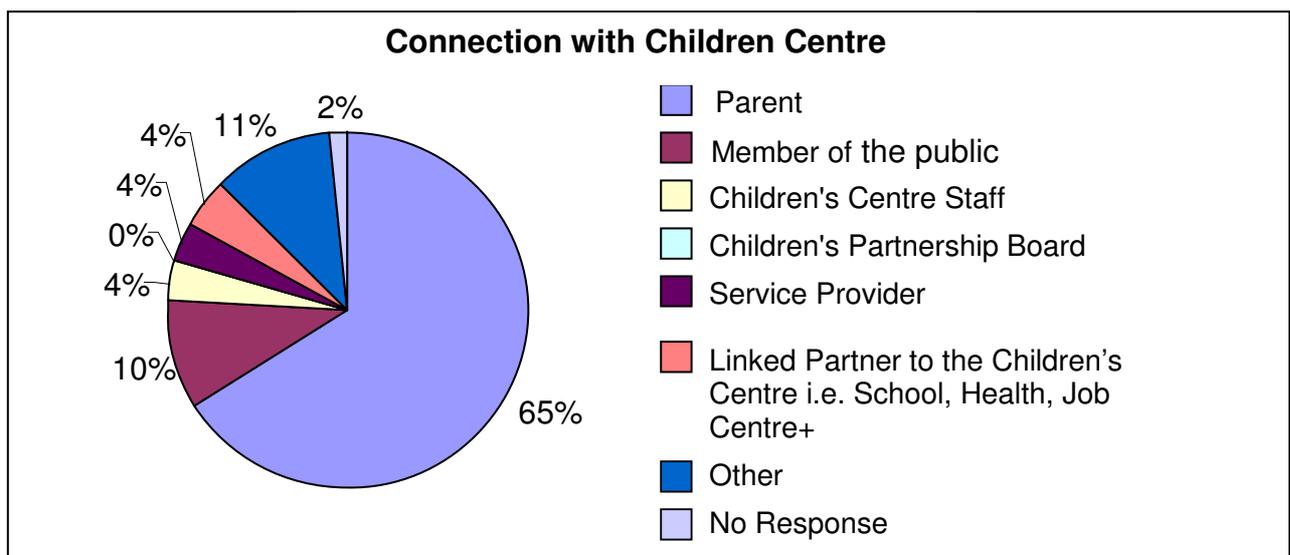
### Data Protection Statement

We do not ask for your name or address as part of this survey. However, we may be able to identify you from some of the other information requested.

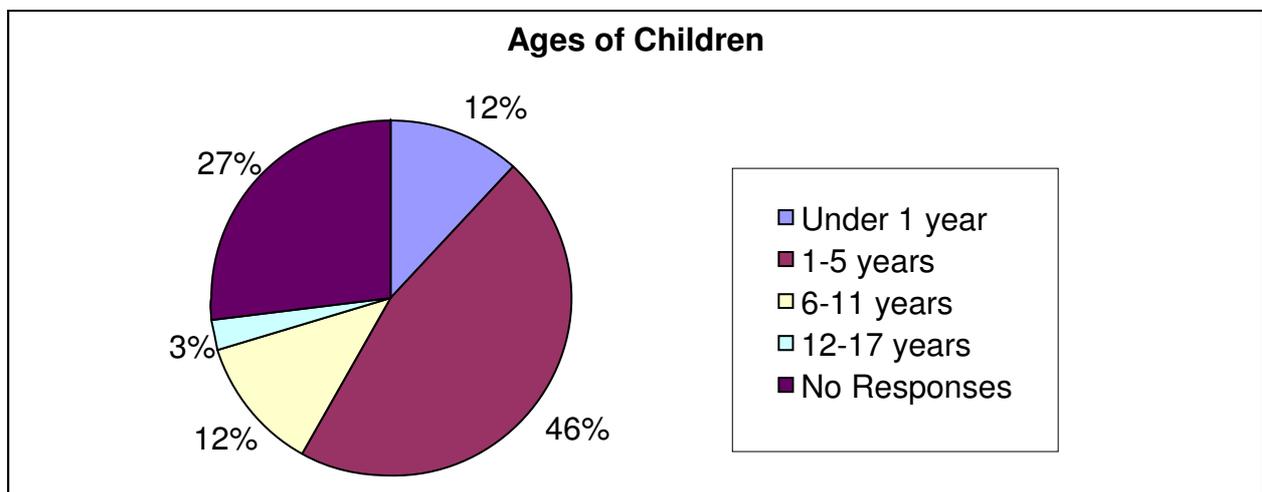
Once the form has been completed the Council will store the details securely and confidentially within the Early Years, Family and Communities filing system. Access to the information you provide will be on a strictly need to know basis and the information will be retained until March 2012 before being securely disposed of.

This information will not be further shared externally with any other organisations or partners however you may also be sent feedback of the results if you request this and provide your email address. Anonymous results will be published on the Thurrock Council websites.

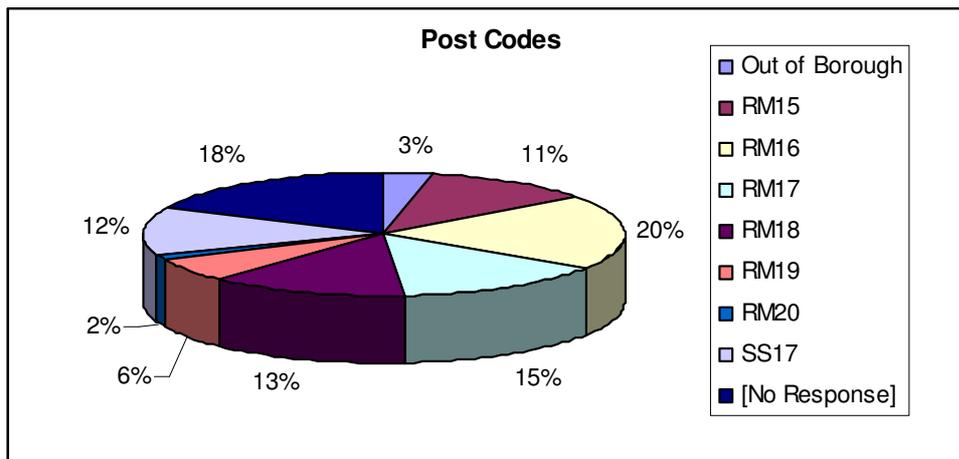
### Which of the following best describes your connection with your local Children's Centres?



### If you are a parent, what are the ages of your children (Please state)

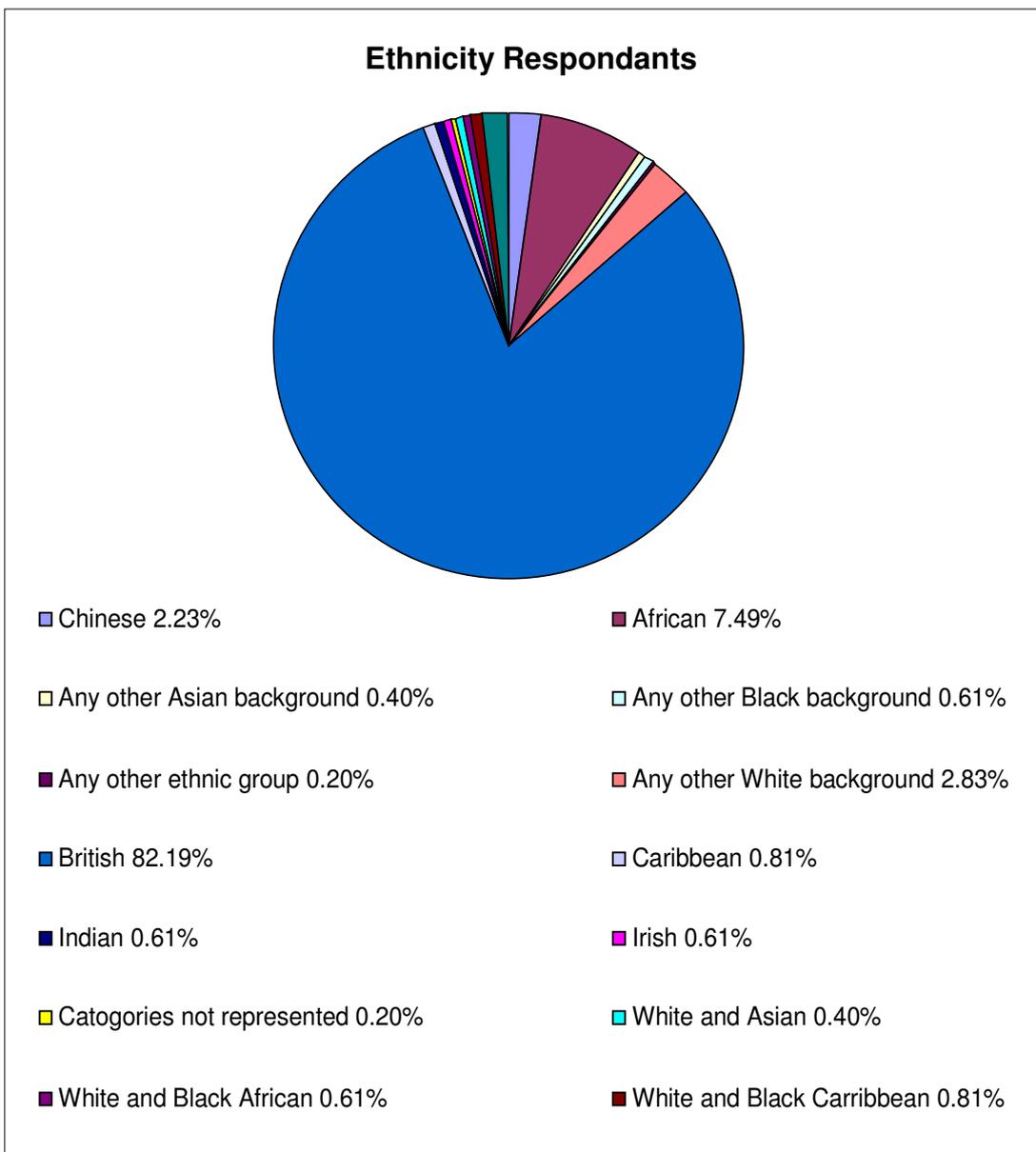


What is your postcode:

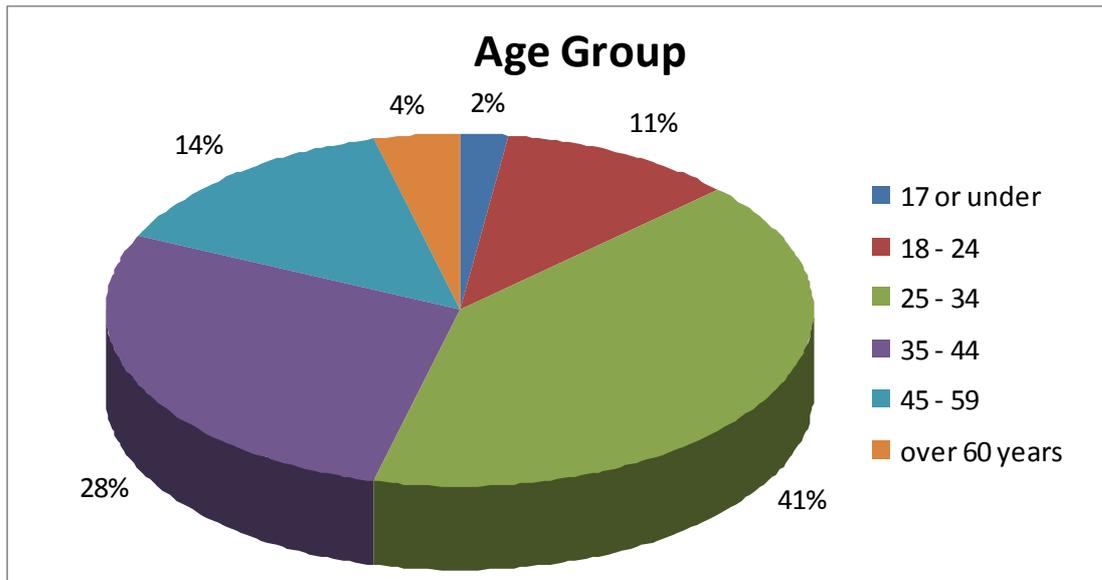


## Equalities Monitoring Form Results

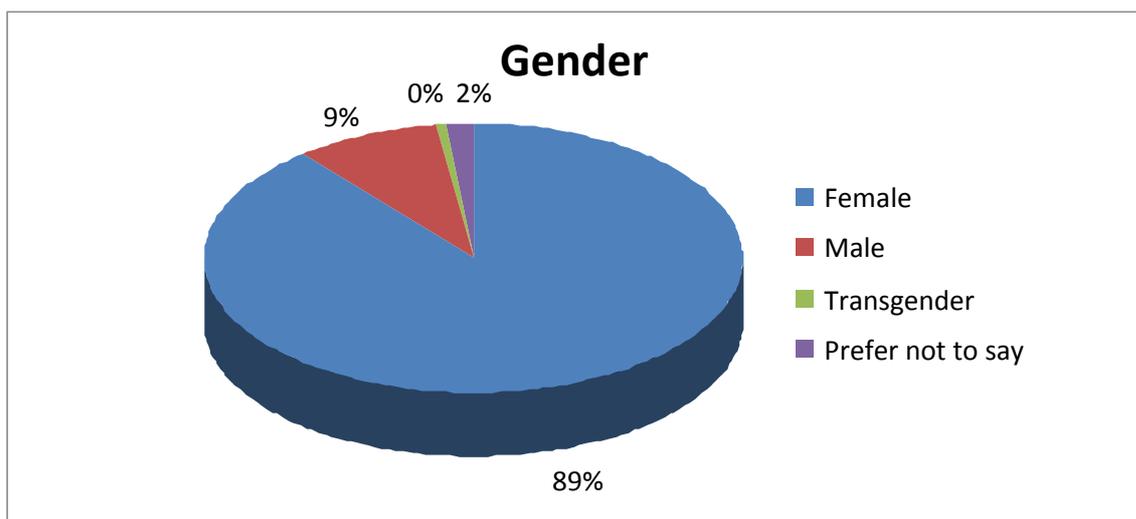
What is your ethnic group, choose ONE and tick the appropriate box (please tick one answer)



Please specify your age group (please tick one answer)

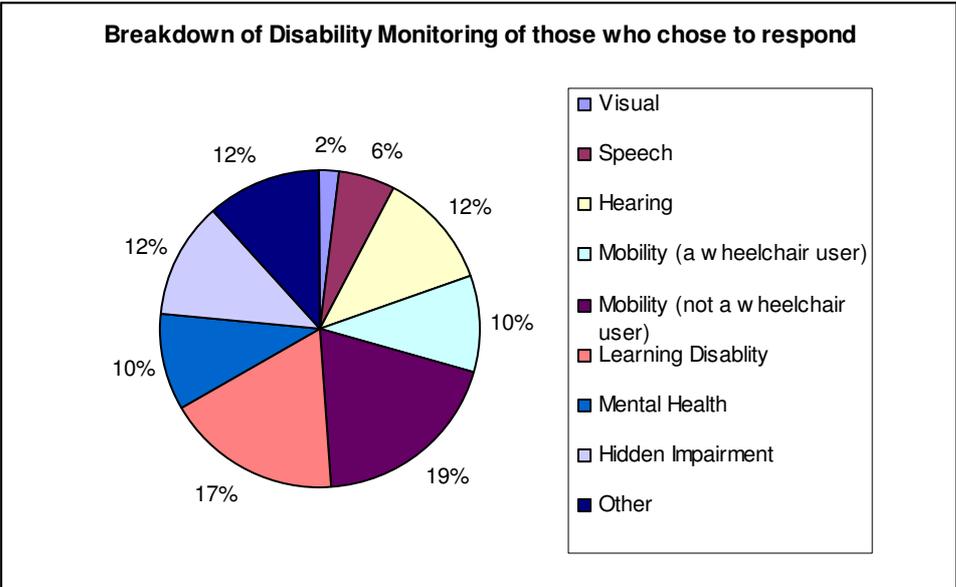


Please specify your gender



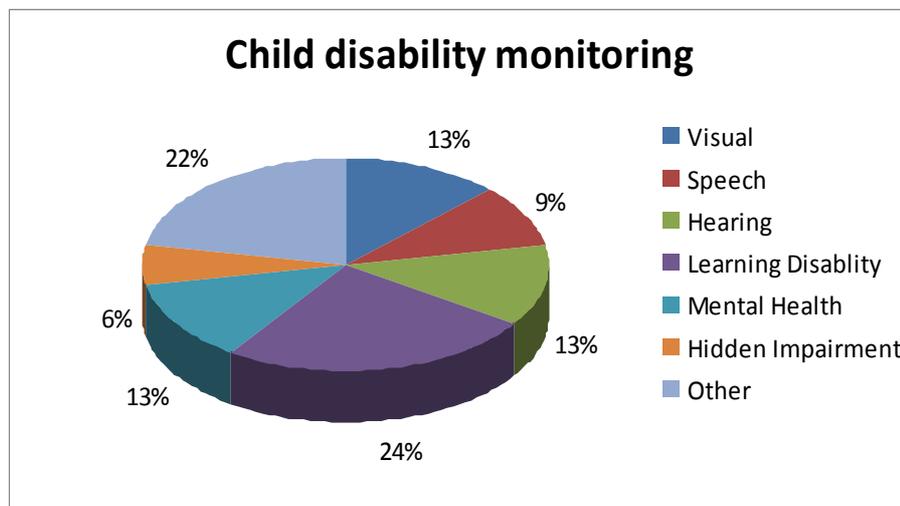
**Disability Impairment Monitoring**

If you are disabled, would you describe your impairment as (tick all that apply):



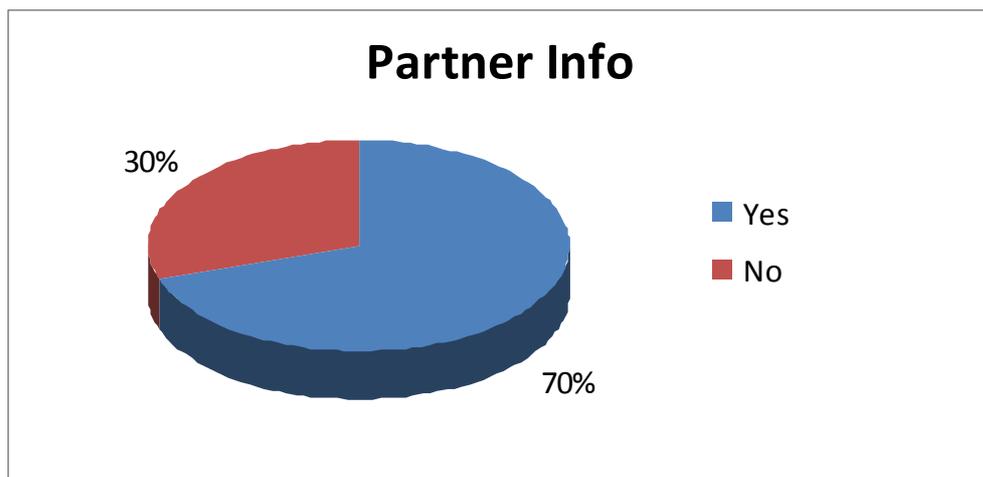
### Child Disability Monitoring

If your CHILD is disabled, would you describe their impairment as (tick all that apply):



**Note:** Nil Response to the following options:  
*Mobility (not a wheelchair user)*  
*Mobility (a wheelchair user)*

### Do you live with a partner?



### What happens next?

Following the end of the consultation we will use the information gathered, along with the information we already hold, to inform the decisions that are made about the future delivery of Children’s Centres. The final decisions will be published in children’s Centres across the Borough and on the following websites:

Thurrock Council [www.thurrock.gov.uk](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk)

Family information Service website: [www.askthurrock.org.uk](http://www.askthurrock.org.uk)