

Summary of Consultation Process

Methodology - Prior to the commencement of the consultation period, stakeholders (including parent carers) were involved in formal and informal conversations regarding the services areas subject to this Review. This gave them the opportunity to comment on the existing arrangements and the required direction of travel. At the Options Appraisal Workshop stakeholders they were then involved in finalising and scoring the various Options.

The formal consultation period commenced on 27th February 2017. Initially due to conclude on 21st May 2017, the window of consultation was subsequently extended to 9th June 2017 to allow for greater feedback.

An online survey was designed for adult stakeholders (parent carers, staff working with children with a disability etc.). A copy of the survey and information sheet is available at Appendix A. Details of the survey were distributed amongst the various service users and provider networks known to the Council.

During the consultation process a series of (formal and informal) engagement activities and events with stakeholders were run to promote the completion of the survey by adult stakeholders:-

- Facilitate workshops with parent carer representatives and wider adult stakeholders around the County.
- A family fun day at the National Waterfront Museum where attending parent carers were asked to participate in the survey.
- Attendance at a short breaks parent carer group.
- Discussions with service providers in the County.
- Discussion during liaison meetings with colleagues in Education, Adult Services, Health and other stakeholders.

Although children and young people were free to participate by completing the online survey, it was recognised at the outset of the consultation that obtaining their views would require additional engagement expertise, e.g. to support those with communication difficulties. As the Council lacked sufficient capacity to properly undertake this activity, we commissioned a local third sector organisation, Interplay, to provide support.

With the input of Interplay, we have undertaken the following engagement activities with children and young people.

- Run the aforementioned family fun day at the Waterfront Museum.
- Held feedback events at seven different children's services commissioned by the Council.
- Run two half-day sessions at Gorseinon Evolve Youth Hub specifically for children with additional needs or a disability.

Staff at Ysgol Pen-Y-Bryn Special School sought the views of a number of children with learning disabilities, autism and communication disabilities. A

thorough breakdown on the types of questions asked, activities undertaken and level of response can be found in Appendix B

Level of response - One of the earliest findings of the Review was the need to improve the level and depth of information captured to assist service planning and strategic decision-making for this particular cohort of children and young people. One of the challenges is the presence of different information management systems between the various departments and agencies.

The situation is complicated further by virtue of a wide range of definitions in use to describe children with additional needs and/or a disability. Estimating the number of children in Swansea with an additional need or disability therefore depends on how broadly you choose to define the terms.

At the upper level, according to self-reported figures within the Census 2011, the number of children and young people (0-19 years) with a disability or impairment that limits their day-to-day activities is approximately 2500. This represents about 4.7% of the population. Alternatively, reference could be made to figures based on some form of independently assessment of need: for example, the numbers with an SEN statement, those in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or those open to social services. Each of these definitions will produce a very different figure.

What is clear is that no single figure is definitive and that we need to improve our information systems for the future. However, in terms of the numbers of children and young people currently accessing the targeted and specialist services subject to this review, it is thought that the total figure is around 620 children and young people.

Understanding how many families these 620 children and young people belong to is unclear as many families have more than one child with an additional need or disability.

The consultation exercise captured a total of 133 different views: 42 adults and 91 children.

Thus, in terms of children and young people we received feedback from just under 15% of the population (620). It is submitted that this is a reasonable response in these circumstances:-

- This is a particularly difficult cohort to reach. Engaging with children and young people, particularly those with a disability, requires time and resource to develop tools and methods to gather information to let them know that their voices have been heard. It is clear that Interplay have proven to be a valuable resource in this area and supported the Council in ensuring that feedback from children and young people is prioritised. The feedback from children and young people is valuable in helping to develop the service and moving the preferred options forward.

- The Council has relatively little experience of undertaking such an exercise at a County wide level. Many children and young people claimed they had not been involved in consultation prior to this opportunity. The experience of 'having a voice' was received with excitement by some with others experiencing anxiety because this engagement was something new.

By comparison to children and young people, the numbers of adults responding to the survey was poor. Information gleaned during the consultation exercise, some of it anecdotal, provides a number of potential reasons.

- We lack the capacity required to reach out and effectively communicate with a large portion of the affected population.
- Not all adults feel able to access digital surveys or may need support in fully understanding the information that is presented to them. While great care was taken to make the consultation survey and associated documents user friendly, it is a subject area that would benefit from a more dynamic means of engagement (as demonstrated through the events arranged for children and young people). The language used may not always be familiar to some and more engagement alongside the formal consultation would help with this. It would also be useful if it was facilitated by someone with an existing relationship with the respondent. In addition to the low response rate, the relatively high number of 'don't know' responses is potentially a further indicator of the difficulties with traditional surveys.
- There is a feeling of anxiety reported around services, changes, and potential loss of services. This may impact upon an individual's ability to fully focus on the questions being asked.
- The benefits and disadvantages of parent carer participation services might be perceived as fairly abstract.
- Parents are not necessarily familiar with some of the services and therefore may find it difficult to comment, e.g. home care is accessed by a very small number of children across Swansea.
- Many parents do not believe their contributions will have any material impact. This is a view potentially based on relatively little changing over a long period of time and a lack of change following previous consultation exercises.

The Council's Consultation Coordinator described the methodology and the feedback received as meeting the Gunning principles for consultation. Furthermore, in terms of the three recommendations put forward for approval:

- one actually proposes we invest more resources to ensure there is improved consultation in the future (Parent Care Participation);
- the second (Play and Leisure Opportunities) proposes to delay the introduction of the grant scheme, in part, to allow further consultation; and

- the third (home care) entails a small expansion of an in-house service which should not detriment any family.

Feedback regarding Parent Carer Participation – It is submitted that the level of feedback from adults is further evidence of the urgent need to improve local arrangements.

Even amongst those adults who were engaged and chose to respond to the survey, the overwhelming majority supported the creation of an independent parent carer forum (see Figure 1).

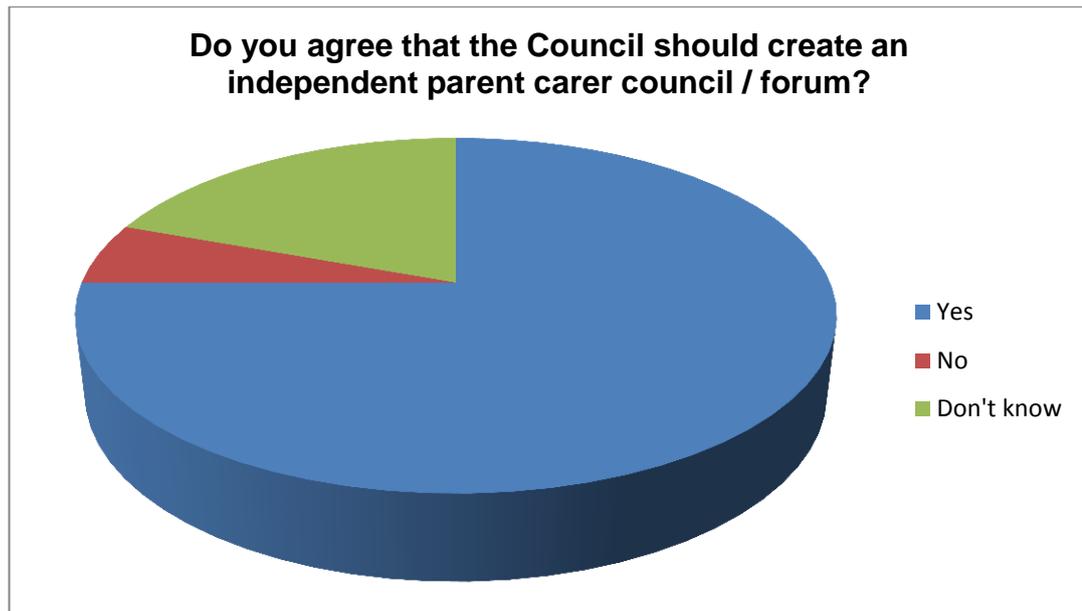


Figure 1

Given the nature and complexity of this area, it was not discussed during the children and young people engagement events.

Feedback regarding Play and leisure opportunities - A sizeable proportion (49%) of the adult respondents were in favour of the Council's proposal to develop a grant scheme for the payment of vouchers in place of directly commissioned services (see Figure 2). While this is a significant proportion, it has to be noted that the majority either opposed the proposal or didn't know enough to make an informed decision.

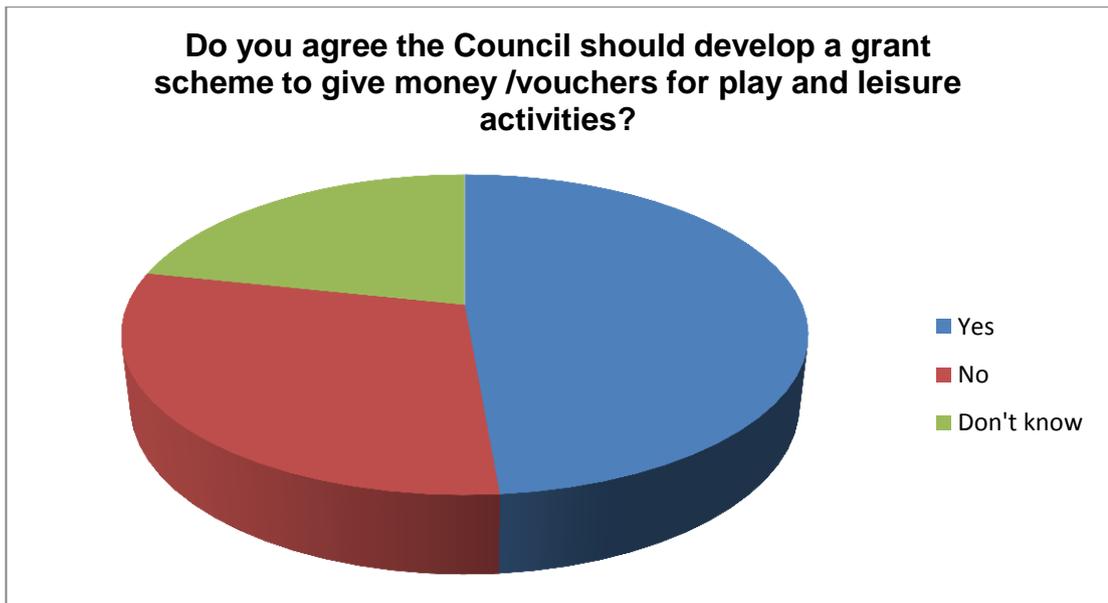


Figure 2

Many children and young people found it difficult to answer the survey questions but were happy to describe the sorts of activities that they currently accessed and what they would like to do in the future. One of the activities devised for these purposes involved giving them each a certain number of vouchers which they could spend on the activities they wished. Each of the different activities had an associated price based on the cost of delivery, e.g. an overnight break might be priced as 4 vouchers whereas attending a designated child disability group would cost 2, and accessing general leisure activities (e.g, the cinema or LC2) would cost them 1.

A summary of the work led by Interplay would suggest that:

- children and young people with additional needs and disabilities have a huge variety of interests and would generally welcome the greater choice and freedom that the voucher scheme would provide;
- the most popular form of play and leisure opportunities are those available to all children (LC2, cinema etc.);
- many would value greater opportunities to take part in fun activities with family members and peer groups (including those without additional needs or a disability).

Feedback regarding Home care - As Figure 3 shows, the vast majority of adult respondents were in support of the preferred Option for developing Home Care services.

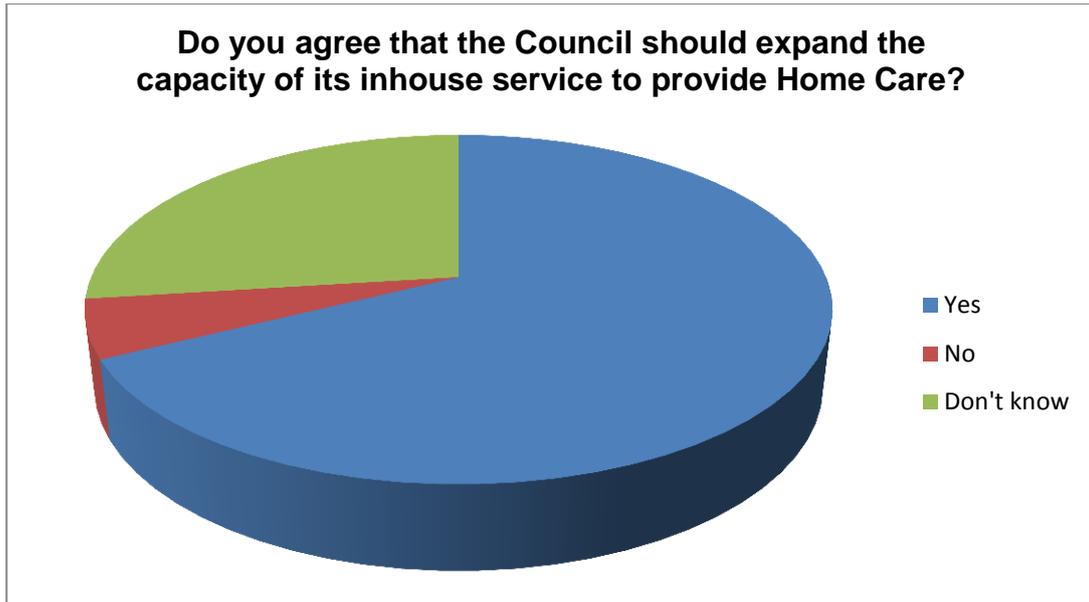


Figure 3

Only 1 of the children spoken to recognised that they were in receipt of home care. The others (understandably) typically found the service difficult to conceptualise. The 1 child in receipt of a service was said to be happy with the existing service but they did not have a firm view about the proposed changes.