

Early Years Strategy and consultation on proposed changes to Hackney's childrens centres

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 **Hackney**

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Introduction:

The report presents a summary of the responses received from the consultation on the Early Years Strategy and proposed changes to the children's centres.

The consultation was live for nearly 9 weeks from 15 September to 16 November 2021.

879 responses to the questionnaire were received during the consultation period and this report provides a summary of the feedback received. Four public engagement events were also held at children's centres across the borough. 69 emails were received in the consultation inbox consultation@hackney.gov.uk. 68 attended the 4 public meetings held during the consultation period.

What were we consulting on?

- We consulted on the proposal to broaden the role of our six multi-agency children's centres into 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than primarily for families with children aged up to five years old.
- We also sought feedback on the proposal to close two children's centres, Hillside and Fernbank in September 2022. These centres are in the north of the borough, where we already have four other centres within walking distance.
- Feedback was also sought on the development of an early years hub, with the special education needs and disability service in the north and south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan.

For further detail, please refer to the consultation [summary](#) and [questionnaire](#)

Consultation & Engagement Approach

The consultation was live on the consultation & engagement platform from 15 September to 16 November 2021.

The consultation summary explaining the purpose of the consultation and online questionnaire was included on the [Council's online consultation platform](#), Citizen Space. The consultation was also signposted via the [Hackney Education website](#), the [Local Offer website](#) and the Council's social media channels.

Consultees were encouraged to respond online, however, for those that prefer a paper copy, these were available from their local children's centre. Staff at the centres were also able to support service users who needed support with completing the questionnaires or had any questions about the consultation. Staff at the children's centres also sent the link to the consultation via parent communication platforms, ipads were available at stay and play sessions, and family practitioners supported parents with vulnerabilities to have their say.

Posters promoting the consultation were displayed at children's centres and libraries across the borough.

Current users of Hillside and Fernbank

- We wrote to all current users of the two centres proposed for closure, letting them know about the consultation and encouraging them to respond to the consultation. Given the impact of the proposed closures on the users of these centres, events were held so that current users could ask any questions about the proposals. The events were held on:
 - Wednesday 6th October, 5pm to 6pm, Fernbank children's centre
 - Tuesday 7th October, 5pm to 6pm, Hillside children's centre
 - Tuesday 8 November, 5pm to 6.45pm, Oldhill School and children's centre
- The consultation was promoted in the Council's free publications Hackney Today and Hackney Life. Hackney Today and Hackney Life are free publications produced by the Council and distributed across the whole of the borough. Hackney Today is published every quarter and Hackney Life is published 8 times a year. 100,000 copies are delivered to homes and businesses in each publication cycle, and a further 8,000 are available from self-service points across the borough.
 - The consultation was featured in [Hackney Today, September edition \(page 7\)](#) and in the [October edition of Hackney Life, \(page 11\)](#).
- Promotion through the Hackney Council for Voluntary Sector e-bulletin sent out to community, voluntary and faith groups in the borough.
- Community organisations Ezer leyoldos, Bikur Cholim, Interlink, and JuMP, working with residents in the Charedi community were notified of the consultation and sent paper copies of the consultation materials.
- Posters were displayed across the libraries across the borough, encouraging residents to take part in the consultation.

Executive Summary

Profile of respondents

- The majority of respondents (63%) indicated that they are a parent/carer/guardian of a child under 6, who uses children's centres.
- 29% of the respondents lived in the N16 postcode area, followed by 23% in the E5 postcode area.
- There was a good mix of responses across all the centres, with the highest relating to Fernbank children's centre (10%), followed by Ann Taylor children's centre (9%).
- 35% of respondents visit a children's centre a few times a week, followed by 32% who visit a children's centre daily.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?

- 44% of respondents agree (strongly agree/ agree) with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency "children & family" hubs, in contrast 39% disagree with the proposal.
- A higher proportion of those aged 25 to 34 agreed with the proposal (47%), 49% of those aged 45 to 54 and 50% of those aged 55 to 64. Please note that the under 16 and 65+ age cohorts haven't been referenced due to the very small sample sizes.
- A higher proportion of female respondents 47% agreed with the proposal in comparison to 25% of male respondents. A higher proportion of male respondents 53% disagreed with the proposal in contrast to 36% of female respondents who disagreed with the proposal
- A higher proportion of Black or Black British respondents agreed with the proposal; (45%), in comparison to 40% that disagreed. Similarly, 44% of White or White British respondents agreed with the proposal in contrast to 35% that disagreed.
- A higher proportion of Asian respondents (44%) disagreed with the proposal compared to 38% who agreed. Similarly a higher proportion of respondents of mixed heritage (49%) disagreed with the proposal compared to 35% who agreed.
- There is a greater level of support for the proposal by residents who identified as charedi (100%) and Jewish (65%), (however this should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size). In contrast there was a greater level of opposition to the proposal from residents that identified as Buddhist (72%), (however this should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size).

Question 6: How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?

- 36% of respondents felt that the 'children and family' hubs proposal negatively affects (negatively/ somewhat negatively), the way they currently access services. Similarly, 36% felt that the proposal affected them positively (positively/ somewhat positively). In contrast 28% chose the neutral response option.
- A greater proportion of residents who rent their home from a social landlord - either from Hackney Council directly or from a housing association - feel that the 'children and family' hubs proposal is more likely to impact on them positively, (40%) and (44%) respectively. In

contrast, more than 40% of owner occupiers buying their home on a mortgage and 45% of respondents buying their homes through shared ownership feel that the proposals are more likely to impact them negatively.

- 50% of the male respondents indicated that the proposals impact on them negatively, whilst 19% felt that it impacted on them positively. In contrast 39% of female respondents felt that the proposals impacted on them positively, whilst 33% felt the proposals impacted on them negatively.
- 46% of residents from a mixed ethnic background feel that the proposals impact on them negatively, compared to 21% who feel that it impacts on them positively. In contrast 46% of respondents who chose the 'other ethnic' background felt that the proposals impacted on them positively, whilst 31% indicated that it impacted on them negatively.
- A greater proportion of respondents identifying as Jewish (55%), Sikh (50%) and Muslim (46%) indicated that the proposals would affect them positively. In contrast, 54% of Hindu residents and 44% of residents who identified as "Atheist" felt that the proposals would affect them negatively.
- 42% of respondents that were pregnant or on maternity leave during the last 2 years felt that the proposals would have a negative impact on how they currently access our services, in contrast to 32% who felt that it would have a positive impact.
- 44% of respondents that live in the E2 and N1 postcode area felt that the proposals would impact them positively. In contrast, 38% of respondents in the E8 postcode area and 42% in the N16 postcode area felt that it would impact them negatively. The N16 postcode area covers the North East of the borough, where the two centres proposed for closure are located.
- 65% of professionals working in a children's centre felt that the proposals impacted them positively. 67% of respondents working as a health professional (eg. health visitor, GP, CAMHS professional) were ambivalent, choosing the neutral response option, neither positively or negatively. (this should be treated with caution due to small sample size).
- 46% of respondents who identified themselves as a parent/carer/guardian and have used children's centres felt that the proposals would impact them positively, with 33% of the view that it would impact them negatively.
- The greatest level of concern about the proposals was shown by prospective parents/carers/guardians, with 63% feeling that the proposals would impact them negatively.

Question 7: If the 'children and family' hub proposal was to go ahead, please indicate which services you would like to see continued in the hub? (please tick all that apply)

- The most popular services that respondents would like to see in the proposed 'children and family' hub are: 'Stay and play and music activities', (10%), followed by parenting and family support for children up to 5 years of age (9%) and "Early education and childcare with free places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years

- Nearly half of respondents (48%) agree (strongly agree/ agree) with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years.
- There's broad agreement across housing tenure with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years.
- There's broad agreement across the different age profiles with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years. 50% of those aged 16-24 agreed with the proposal whilst 23% disagreed. This is followed by 50% of those aged 25-34 agreeing with the proposal, whilst 28% disagreed.
- **52% of female respondents agreed** with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, with 26% disagreeing with the proposal. In contrast **43% of male respondents disagreed** with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, with 27% agreeing with the proposal.
- A greater proportion of respondents agree with the proposal irrespective of their ethnicity.
- A greater proportion of respondents agree with the proposal irrespective of their religious beliefs.
- Nearly half of respondents without a disability (49%) agreed with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, whilst 28% disagreed. In contrast, 39% of those with a disability agreed with the proposal whilst 34% disagreed.
- 49% of those who weren't pregnant or had been on maternity leave over the last two years agreed with the idea of youth hubs working alongside the 'children and family' hubs. Similarly, 48% of pregnant women or those who'd recently been pregnant agreed with the proposal.
- There is a broad level of agreement with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children up to 19 years of age.
- 71% of professionals working in a children's centre agree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs, whilst 8% disagree. Similarly, 75% of young people that responded agreed with the proposal, with 25% disagreeing (caveat - treat with caution due to small sample size).

Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?

- 59% of respondents disagree with the principle of closing the two children's centres, whilst 22% agree with the proposal.
- The greatest level of opposition to the proposal came from those living in the N16 postcode area, with 62% disagreeing with the proposal, whilst 17% were in agreement. The N16 postcode area is indicative of those living closest to the centres proposed for closure.
- There's a high level of opposition to the proposal irrespective of the interest in the consultation. The highest level of opposition (95%), is from prospective parents/carers/guardians of children who will use children's centres in future.

- There's a general level of disagreement with the principle of closing the two centres by residents across all housing tenures.
- There is broad disagreement with the principle of closing the two centres across all the age profiles, with the exception of those under 16 where 50% agreed with the proposed closure, whilst 41% disagreed.
- A greater proportion of male respondents (75%) disagree with the principle of closing the two centres, compared with female respondents where 55% disagree.
- There is broad opposition to the proposal across all ethnicity profiles.
- There is a higher level of opposition to the proposal from those that indicated that they have secular beliefs (71%), Charedi(66%) and those that have Atheist/no religious beliefs (63%).
- Respondents with and without disabilities disagreed with the principle of closure, 65% and 57% respectively.
- 57% of the respondents that were pregnant or had accessed maternity services in the last two years disagreed with the proposed closure of the two centres. Similarly 59% of those who weren't pregnant or had been on maternity leave over the two last years disagreed with the proposal to close the two centres.
- 80% of respondents that indicated that they're a 'gay man' disagreed with the proposal and similarly 71% of those that identified as a 'Lesbian or Gay woman' also disagreed with the proposed closures. (Please treat this with caution due to the small sample sizes).
- 71% of respondents that live in the N16 postcode area disagreed with the principle of closing the two centres. The N16 postcode area covers the North East of the borough, where the two centres proposed for closure are located.

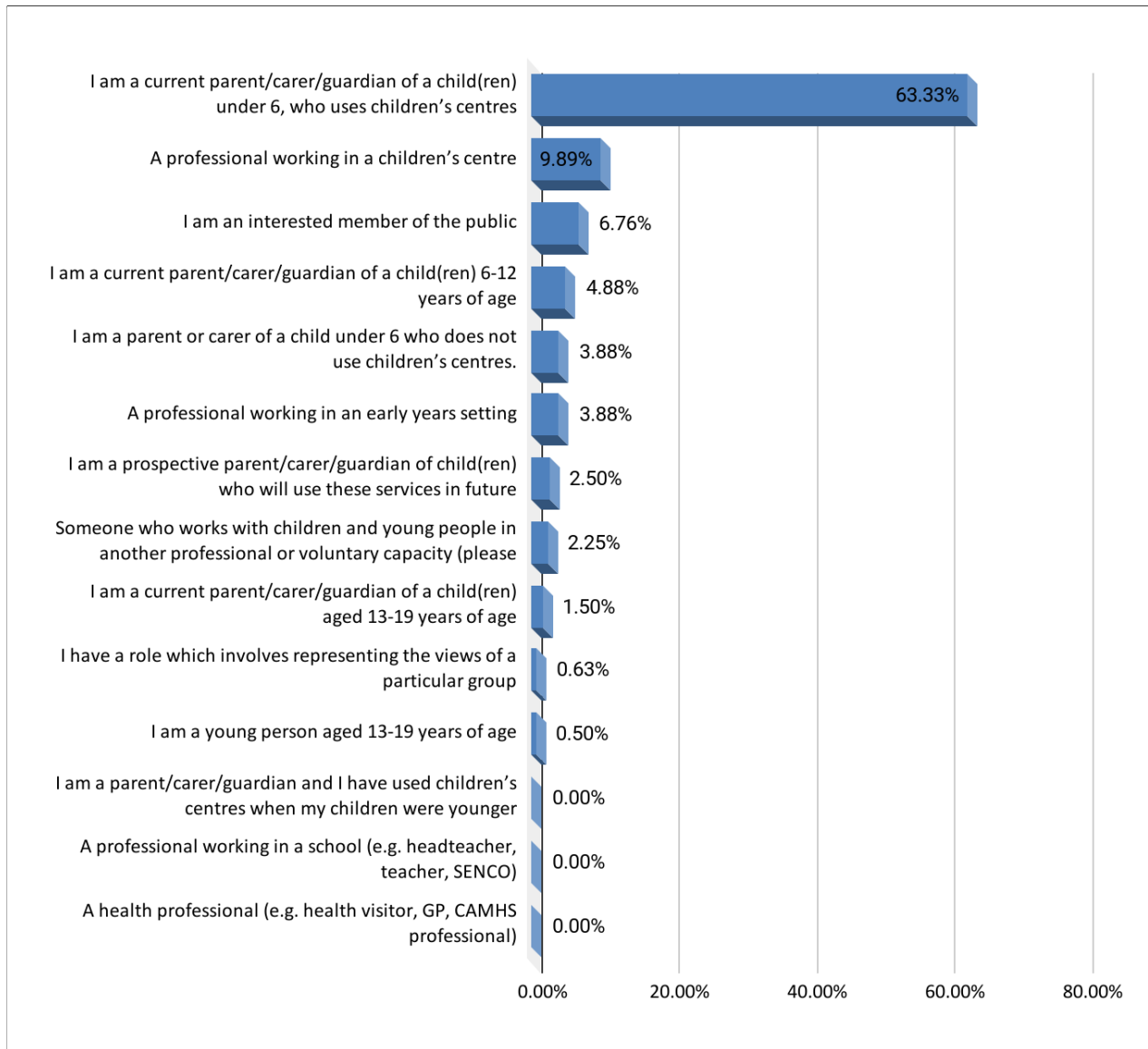
It is worth noting that the proposed closures were generally unsupported by consultees, however the proposed 'early years hubs' had a greater level of support as shown below.

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?

- 58% agreed with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', whilst 20% disagreed with the proposal.
- There is broad support by respondents across all housing tenures for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs, with the highest level of support from those that own their homes outright (66%).
- A greater proportion of respondents across all age groups support the proposal to develop two early years hubs. There is a greater level of support by those aged 55 to 74, with 77% of respondents in this age cohort supporting the proposal.
- There is significant support for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs' by respondents across all religious persuasions, with the highest level of support from Charedi (99%) and Jewish (71%).
- There is a high level of support to the proposal to develop two 'early years' hubs, with 80% of those that work in an early years setting agreeing with the proposal, followed by 75% of respondents that indicated that they work in a school
- The greatest support for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs' is from respondents in the N1 postcode area (78%) and the lowest level of support from those in the N16 postcode area (48%).

Overview Results

Question 1: Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

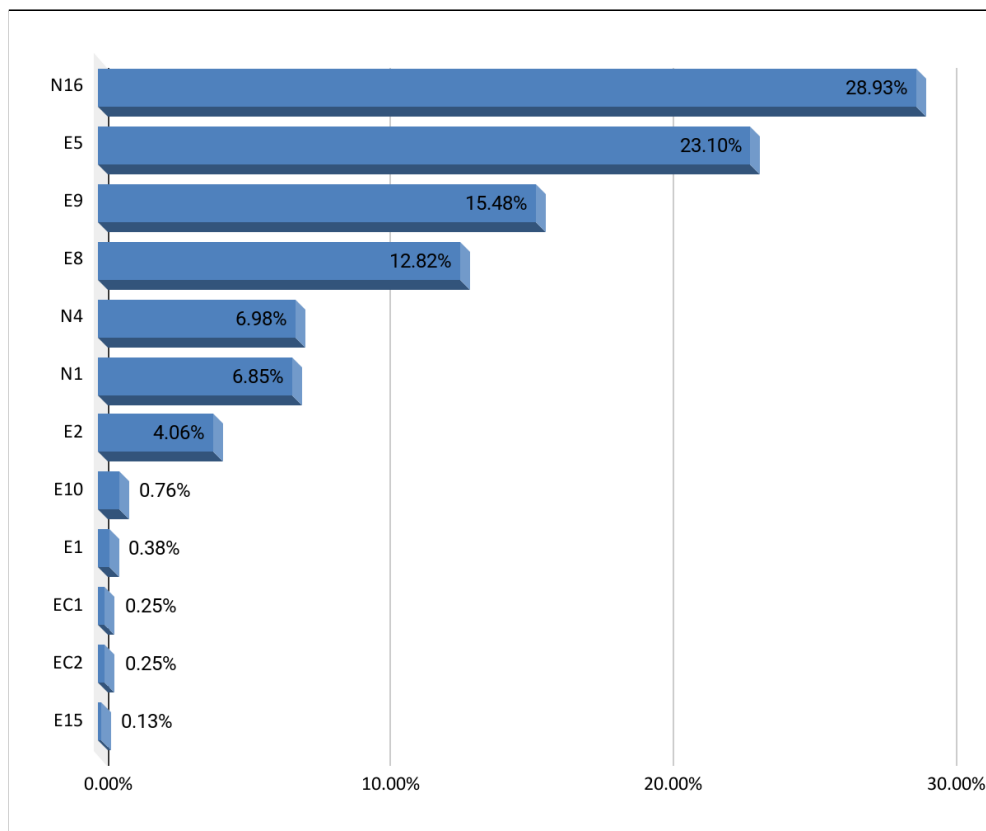


Graph 1: Base (799)

As the graph above shows, the majority of respondents (63%) indicated that they are a parent/carer/guardian of a child under 6, who uses children's centres.

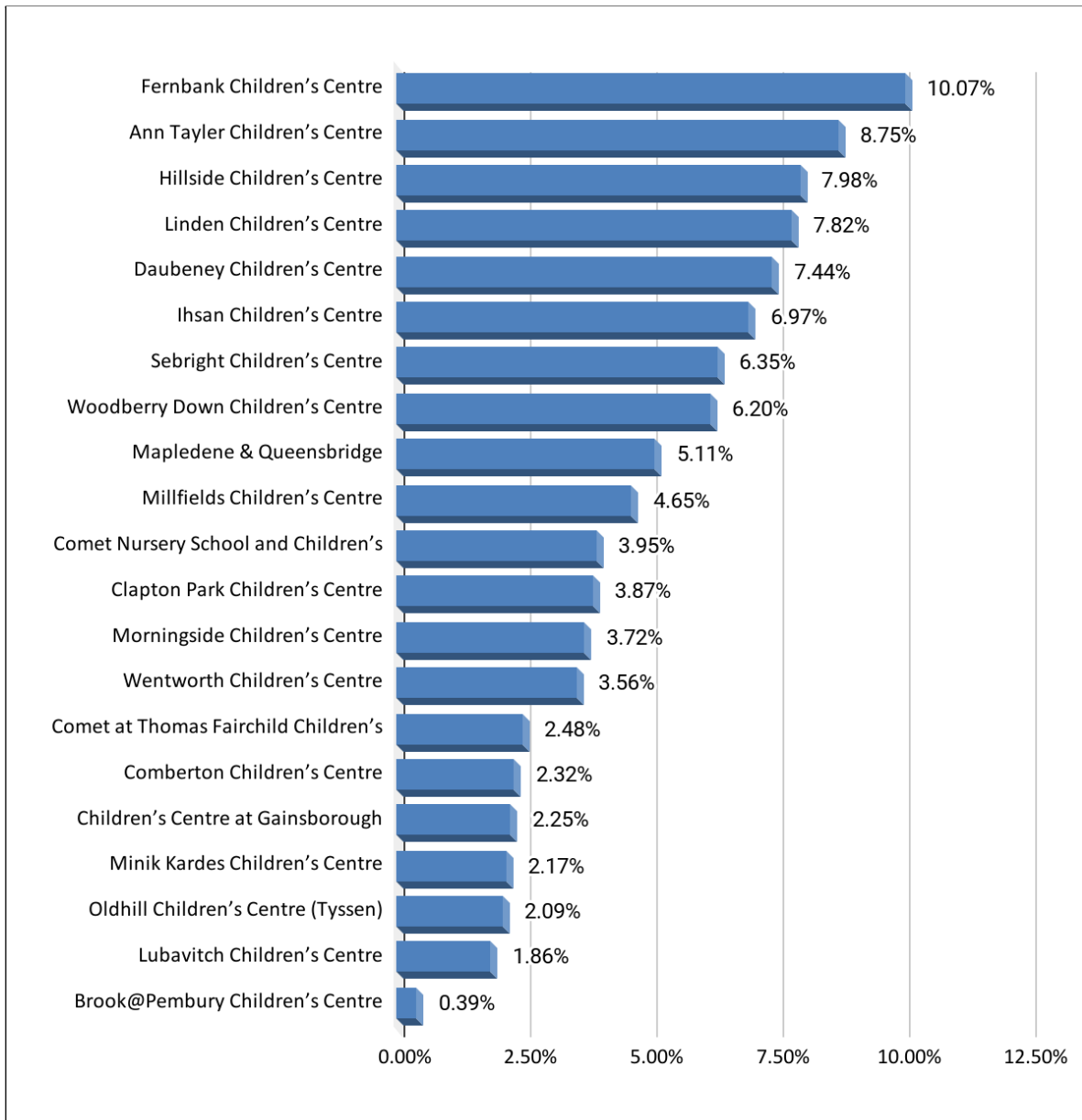
Question 2: Where do you live? (this information will help us to better understand the views of Hackney residents)

As graph 2 shows, 29% of the respondents lived in the N16 postcode area, followed by 23% in the E5 postcode area.



Graph 2: Base (788)

Question 3: Which children’s centre do you usually use? (please select up to 3 options)

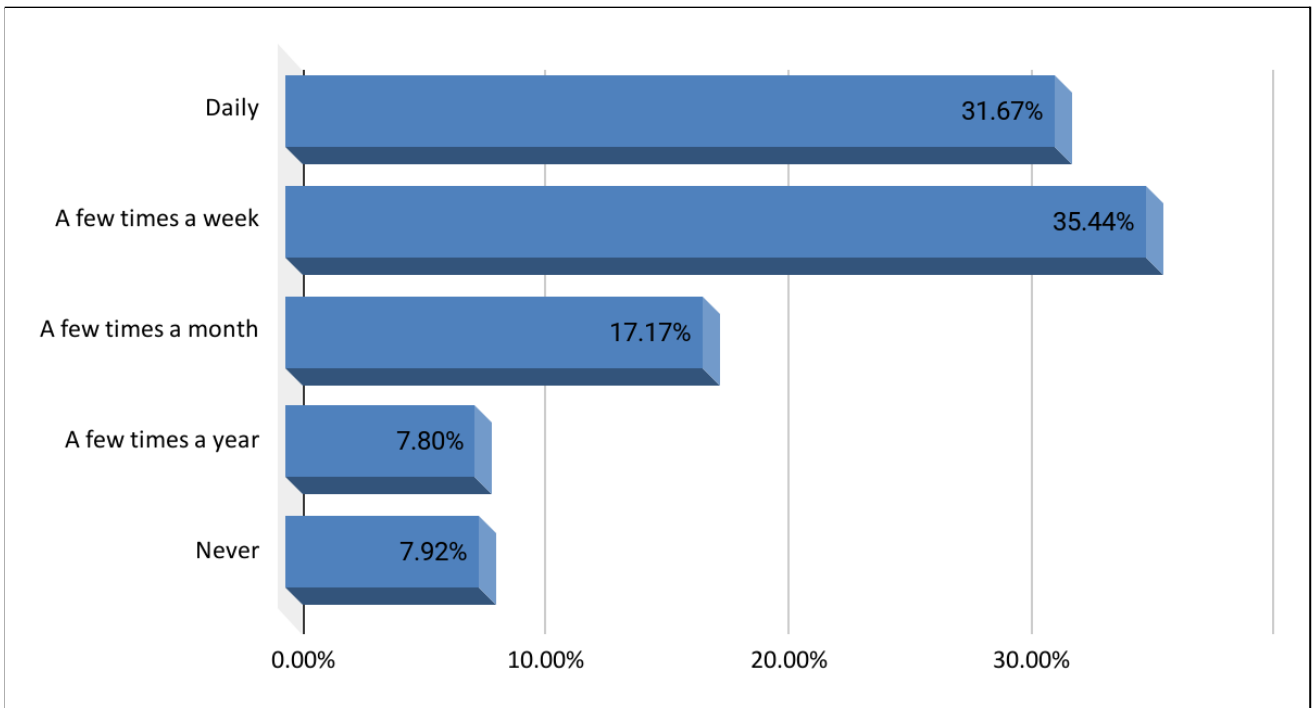


Graph 3: Base (1,291)

As graph 3 shows, there was a good mix of responses across all the centres, with the highest relating to Fernbank children’s centre (10%), followed by Ann Taylor children’s centre (9%).

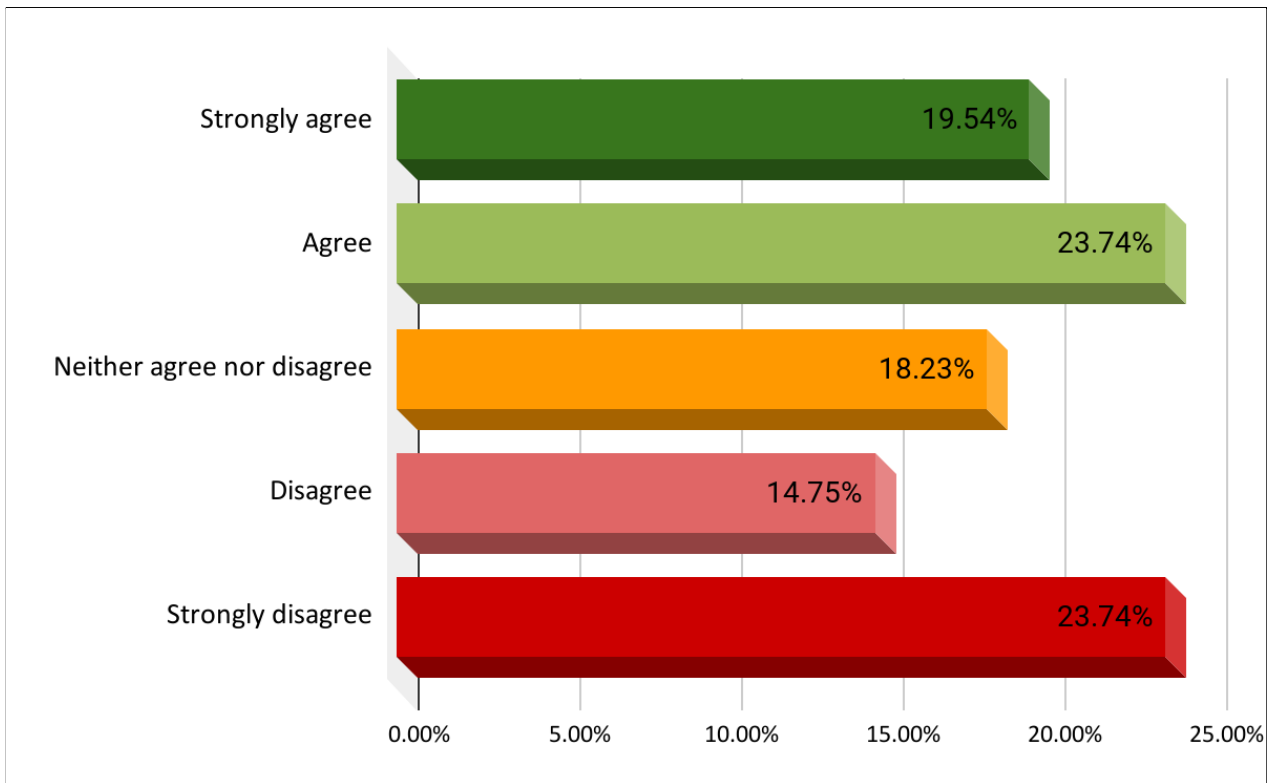
Question 4: How often do you visit the children’s centre(s)?

As graph 4 shows, 35% of respondents visit a children’s centre a few times a week, followed by 32% who visit a children’s centre daily.



Graph 4: Base (821)

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children’s centres into multi agency ‘children and family’ hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?

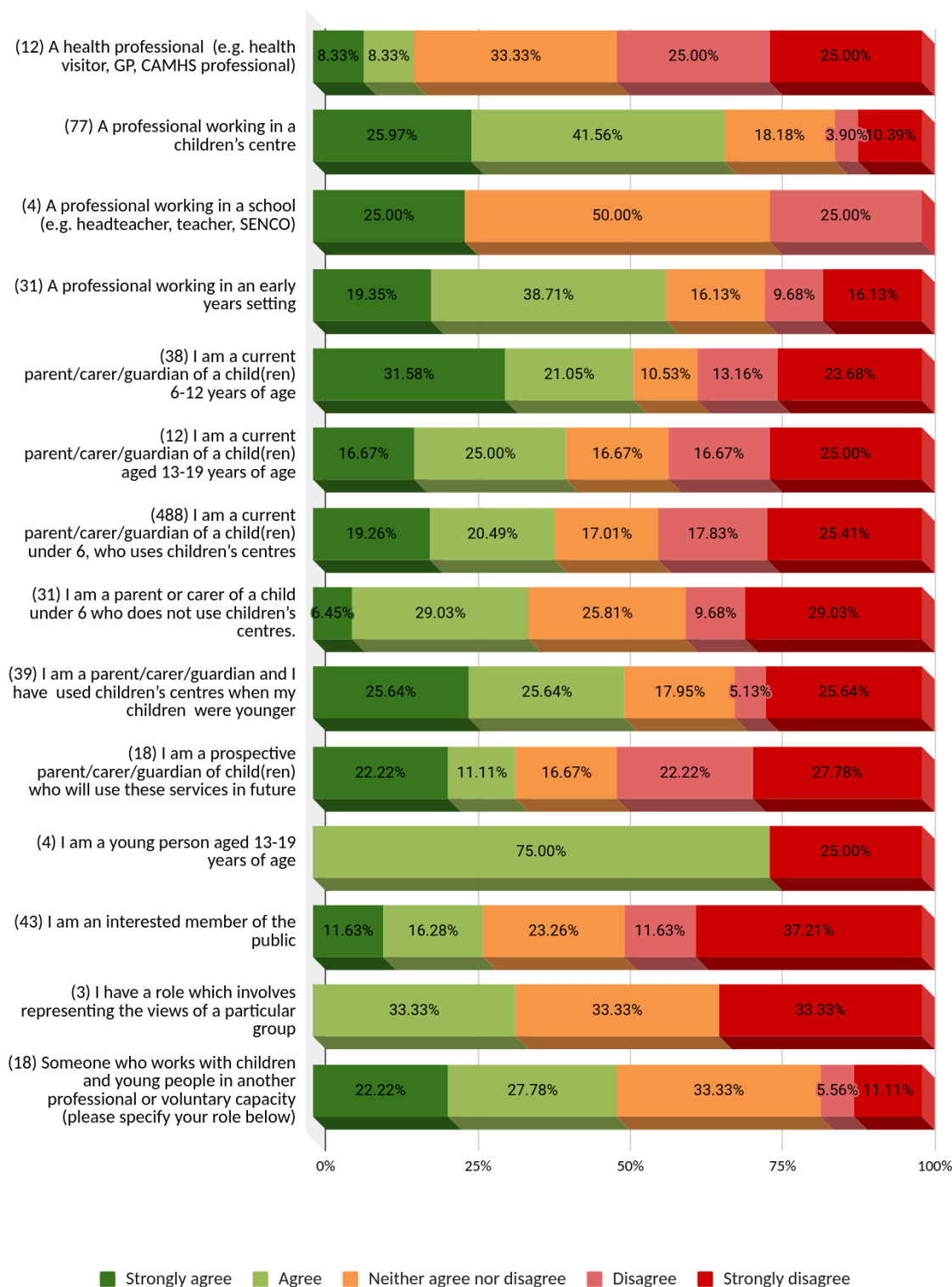


Graph 4: Base (834)

As graph 4 shows, 44% of respondents agree (strongly agree/ agree) with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children’s centres into multi agency “children & family” hubs, in contrast 39% disagree with the proposal.

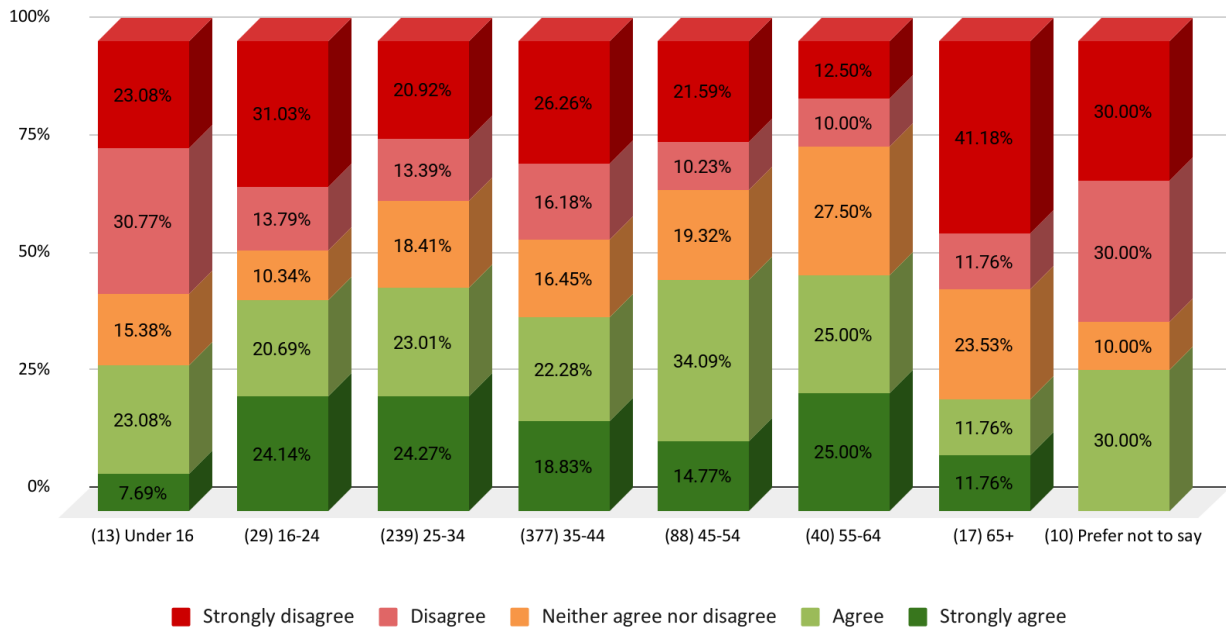
Analysis by interest in the consultation

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?" vs Interest (Base 818)



Analysis by Age

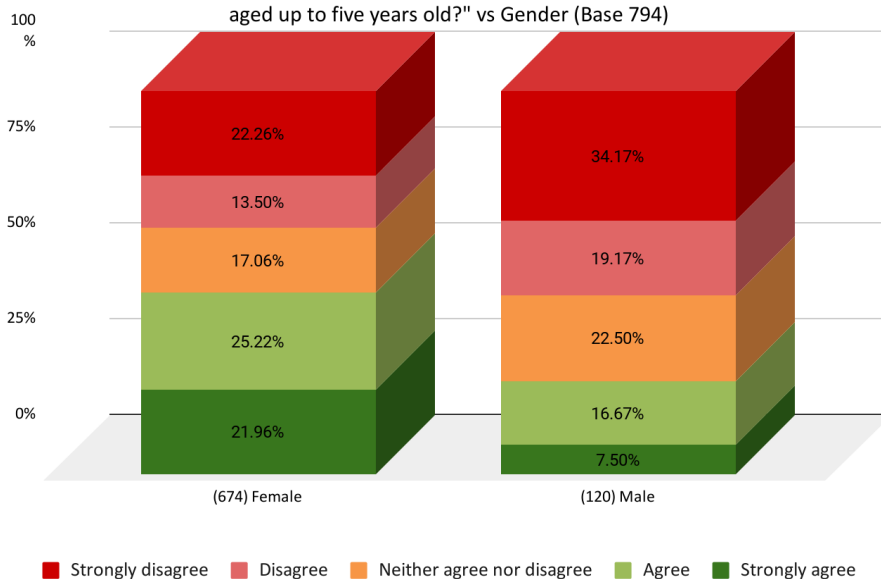
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?" vs Age group (Base 813)



As the graph shows, a higher proportion of those aged 25 to 34 agreed with the proposal (47%), 49% of those aged 45 to 54 and 50% of those aged 55 to 64. Please note that the under 16 and 65+ age cohorts have not been referenced due to the very small sample sizes.

Analysis by Gender

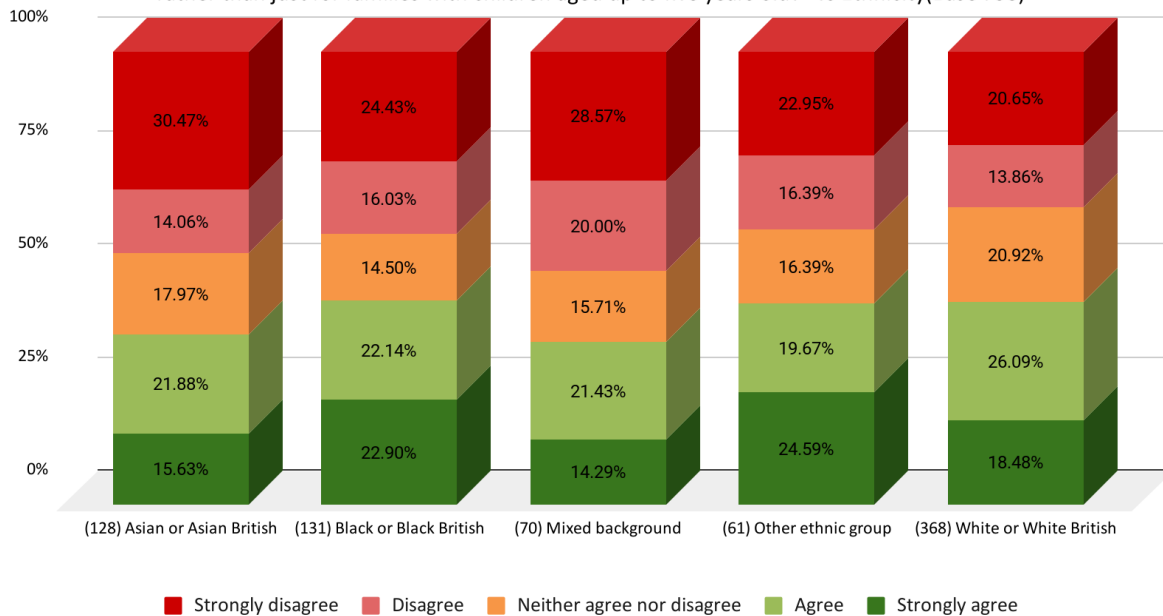
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?" vs Gender (Base 794)



A higher proportion of female respondents 47% agreed with the proposal in comparison to 25% of male respondents. A higher proportion of male respondents 53% disagreed with the proposal in contrast to 36% of female respondents who disagreed with the proposal

Analysis by Ethnicity

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children’s centres into multi agency ‘children and family’ hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?" vs Ethnicity(Base 758)

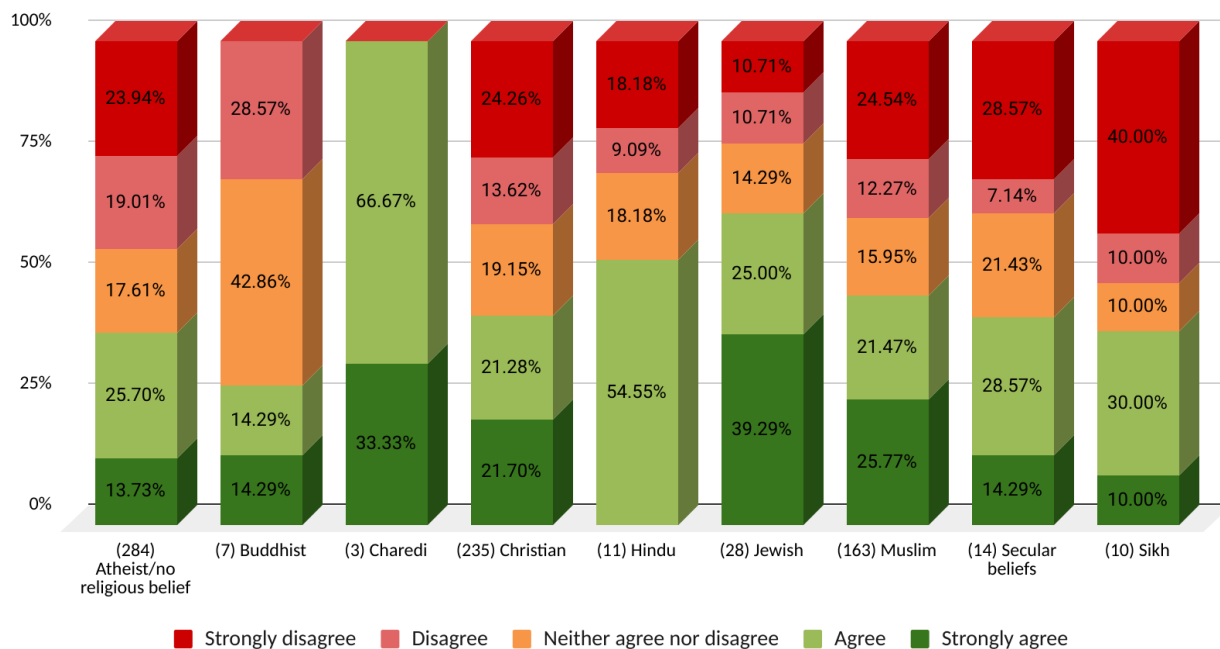


As the previous graph shows, a higher proportion of Black or Black British respondents agreed with the proposal; (45%), in comparison to 40% that disagreed. Similarly, 44% of White or White British respondents agreed with the proposal in contrast to 35% that disagreed.

A higher proportion of Asian respondents (44%) disagreed with the proposal compared to 38% who agreed. Similarly a higher proportion of respondents of mixed heritage (49%) disagreed with the proposal compared to 35% who agreed.

Analysis by religious belief

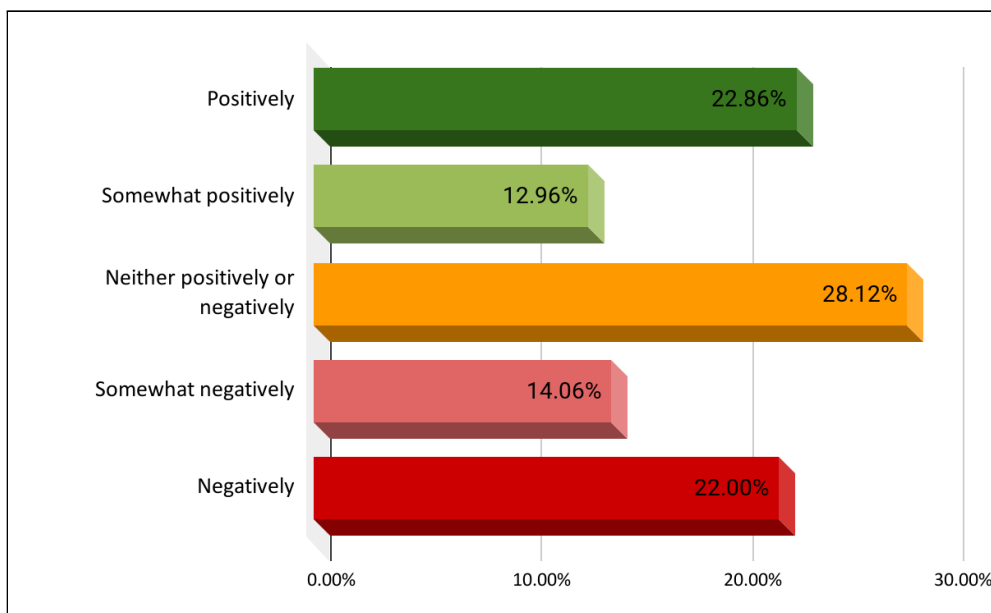
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?" vs Religion (Base 755)



As the graph shows, there is a greater level of support for the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi-agency 'children and family' hubs by residents who identified as charedi (100%) and Jewish (65%), (however this should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size).

In contrast there was greater level of opposition to the proposal from residents that identified as Buddhist (72%), (however this should be treated with caution due to the very small sample size).

Question 6: How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?

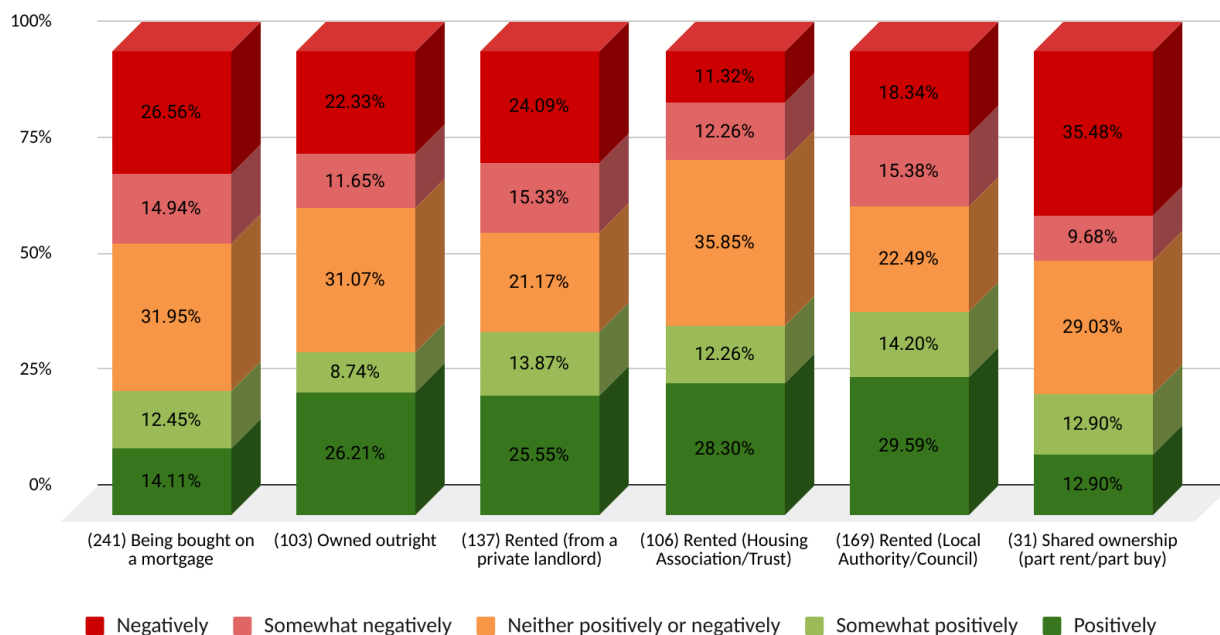


Graph 5 Base (818)

As graph 5 shows, 36% of respondents felt that the 'children and family' hubs proposal negatively affects (negatively/ somewhat negatively), the way they currently access services. Similarly, 36% felt that the proposal affected them positively (positively/ somewhat positively). In contrast 28% chose the neutral response option.

Analysis by Housing Tenure

"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Housing Tenure (Base 794)



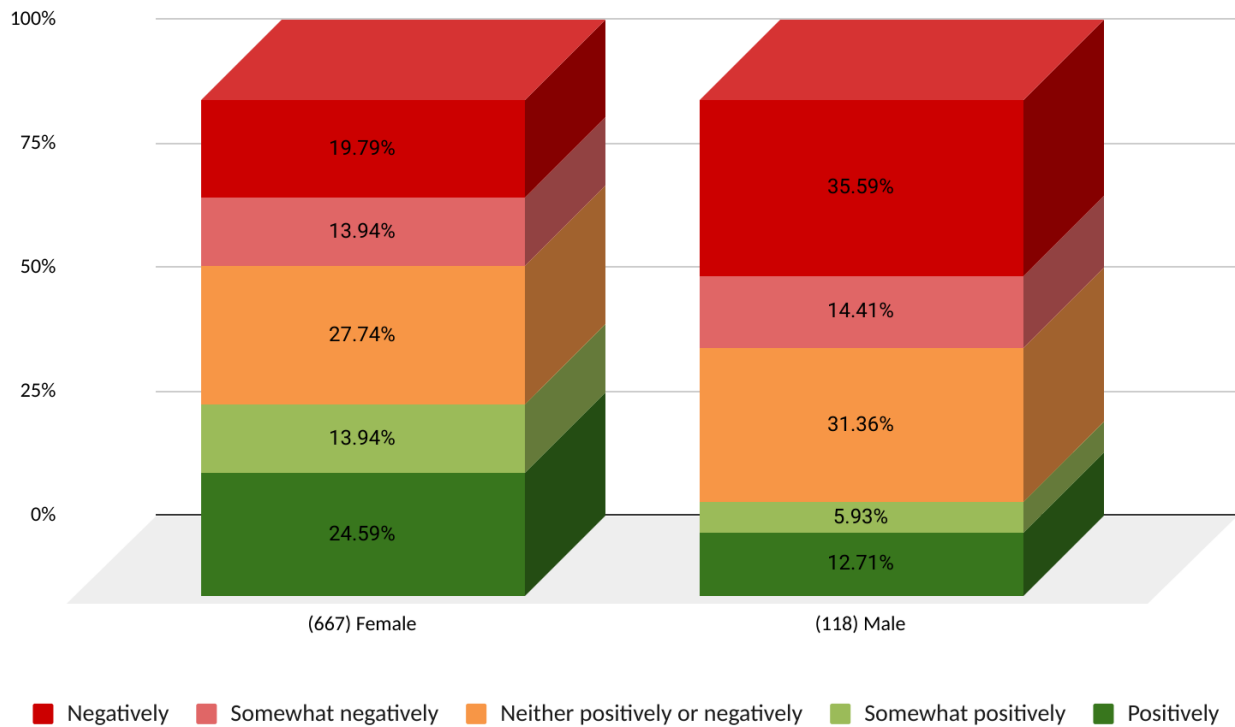
A greater proportion of residents who rent their home from a social landlord - either from Hackney Council directly or from a housing association - feel that 'children and family' hubs proposal is more likely to impact on them positively, (40%) and (44%) respectively. In contrast, more than 40% of owner occupiers buying their home on a mortgage and 45% of respondents buying their homes through shared ownership feel that the proposals are more likely to impact them negatively.

Analysis by Gender

50% of the male respondents indicated that the proposals impact on them negatively, whilst 19% felt that it impacted on them positively.

In contrast 39% of female respondents felt that the proposals impacted on them positively, whilst 33% felt the proposals impacted on them negatively.

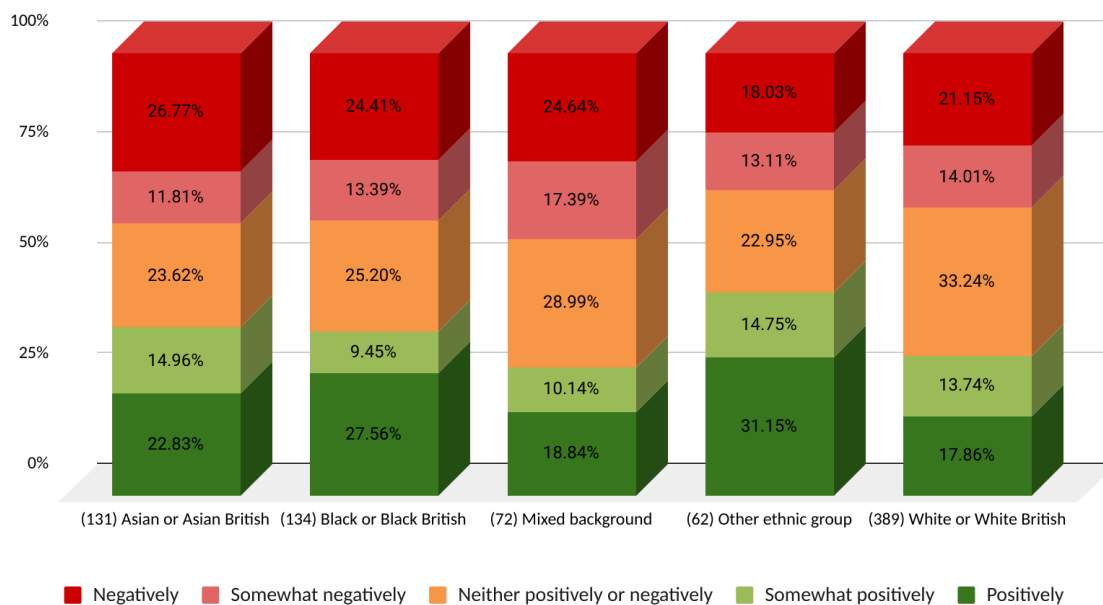
"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Gender (Base 785)



Analysis by Ethnicity

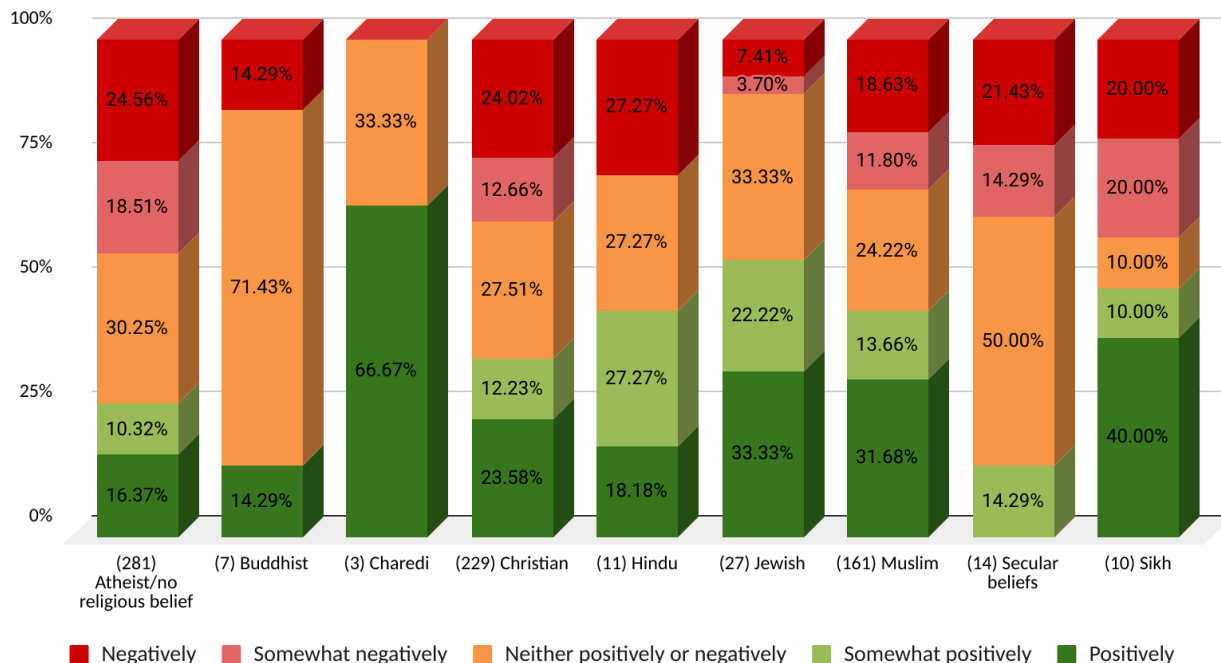
46% of residents from a mixed ethnic background feel that the proposals impact on them negatively, compared to 21% who feel that it impacts on them positively. In contrast 46% of respondents who chose the 'other ethnic' background felt that the proposals impacted on them positively, whilst 31% indicated that it impacted on them negatively.

"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Ethnicity (Base 788)



Analysis by Religion

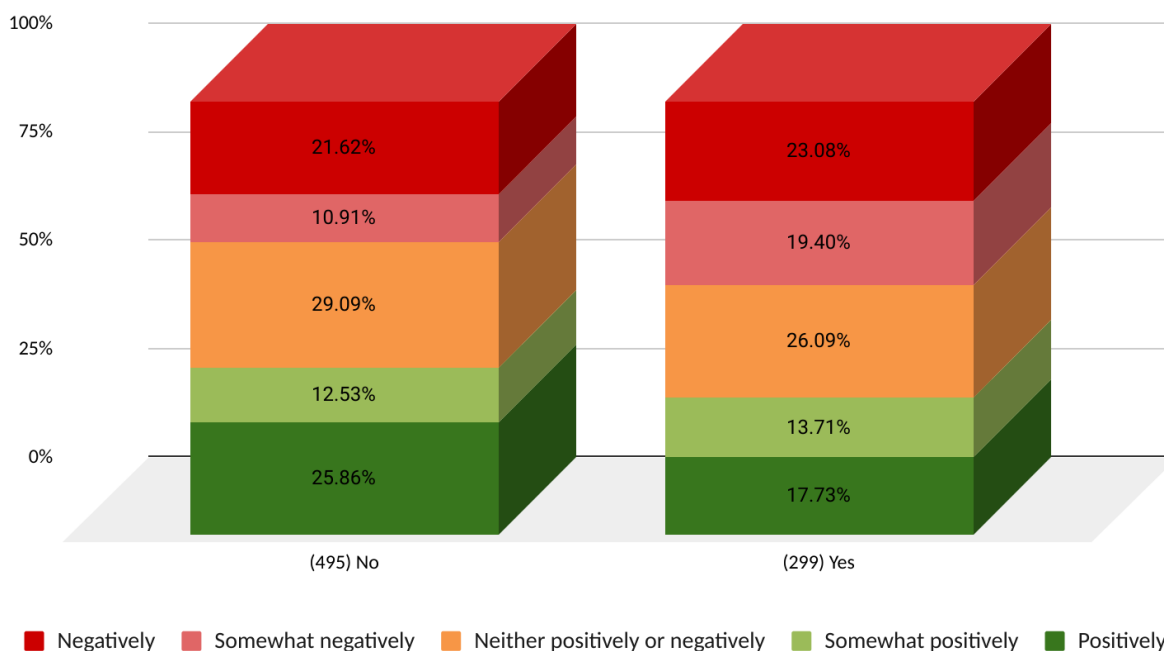
"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Religion (Base 743)



As the graph shows, a greater proportion of respondents identifying as Jewish (55%), Sikh (50%) and Muslim (46%) indicated that the proposals would affect them positively. In contrast 54% of Hindu residents and 44% of residents who identified as "Atheist" felt that the proposals would affect them negatively.

Analysis by pregnancy and maternity status

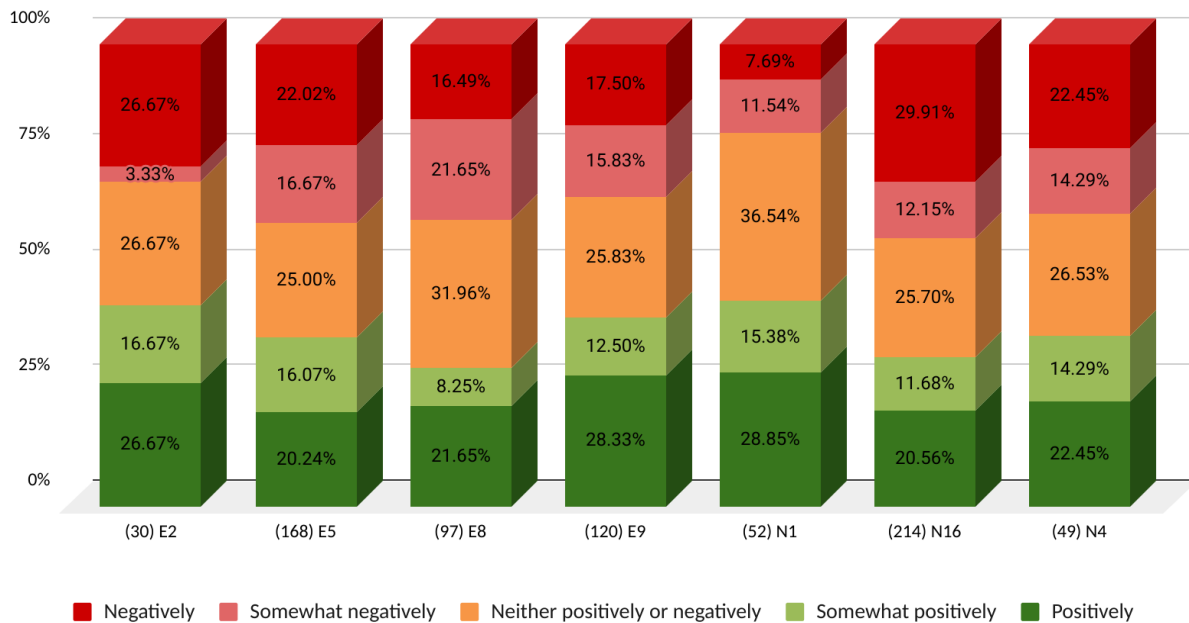
"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Pregnancy/Maternity (Base 794)



42% of respondents that were pregnant or on maternity leave during the last 2 years felt that the proposals would have a negative impact on how they currently access our services, in contrast to 32% who felt that it would have a positive impact.

Analysis by postcode

"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Postcode (Base 730)

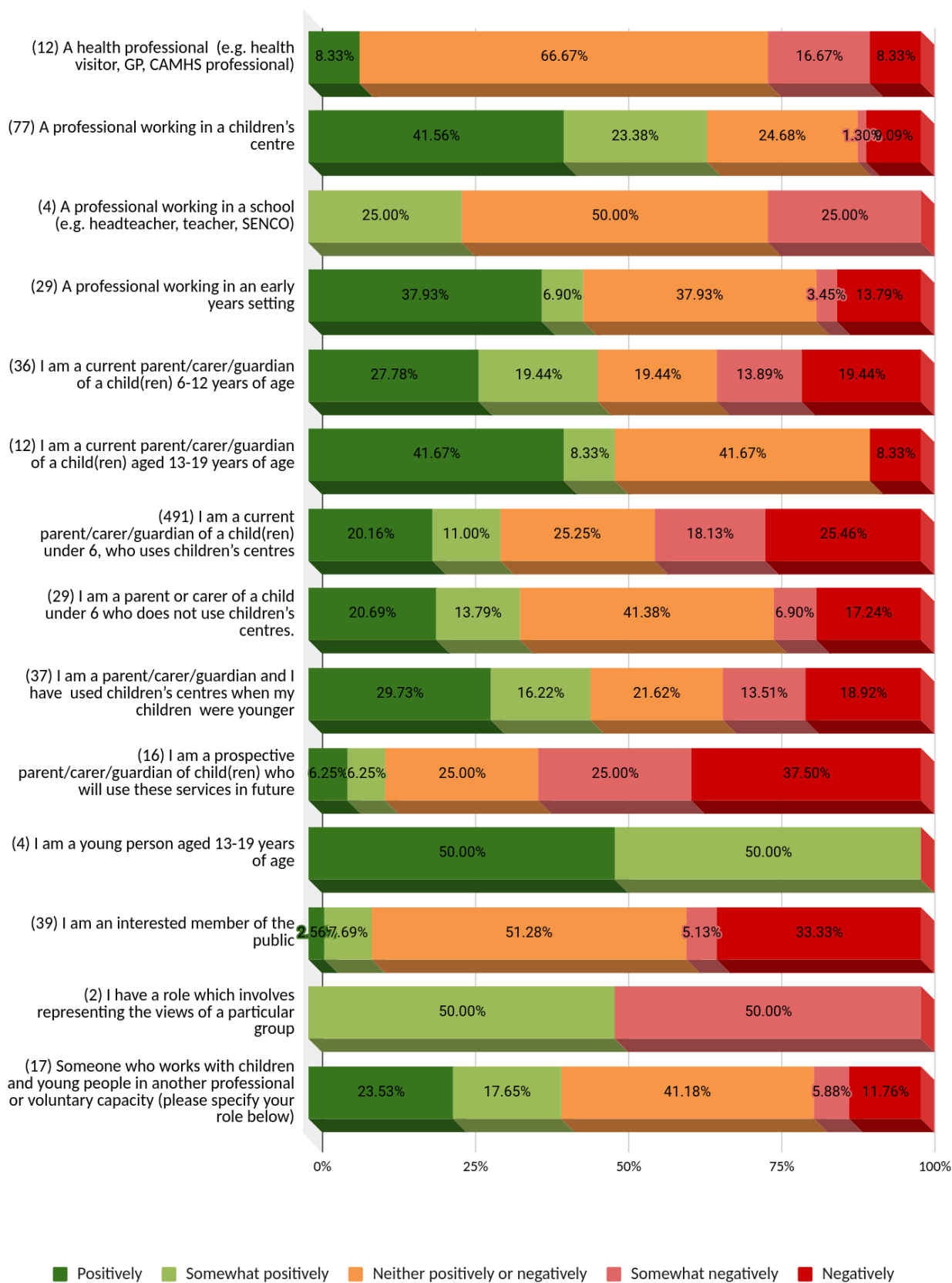


As the graph shows, 44% of respondents that live in the E2 and N1 postcode area felt that the proposals would impact them positively. In contrast, 38% of respondents in the E8 postcode area and 42% in the N16 postcode area felt that it would impact them negatively.

The N16 postcode area covers the North East of the borough, where the two centres proposed for closure are located.

Analysis by interest in the consultation

"How would the 'children and family' hubs proposal affect the way you currently access our services?" vs Interest (Base 805)

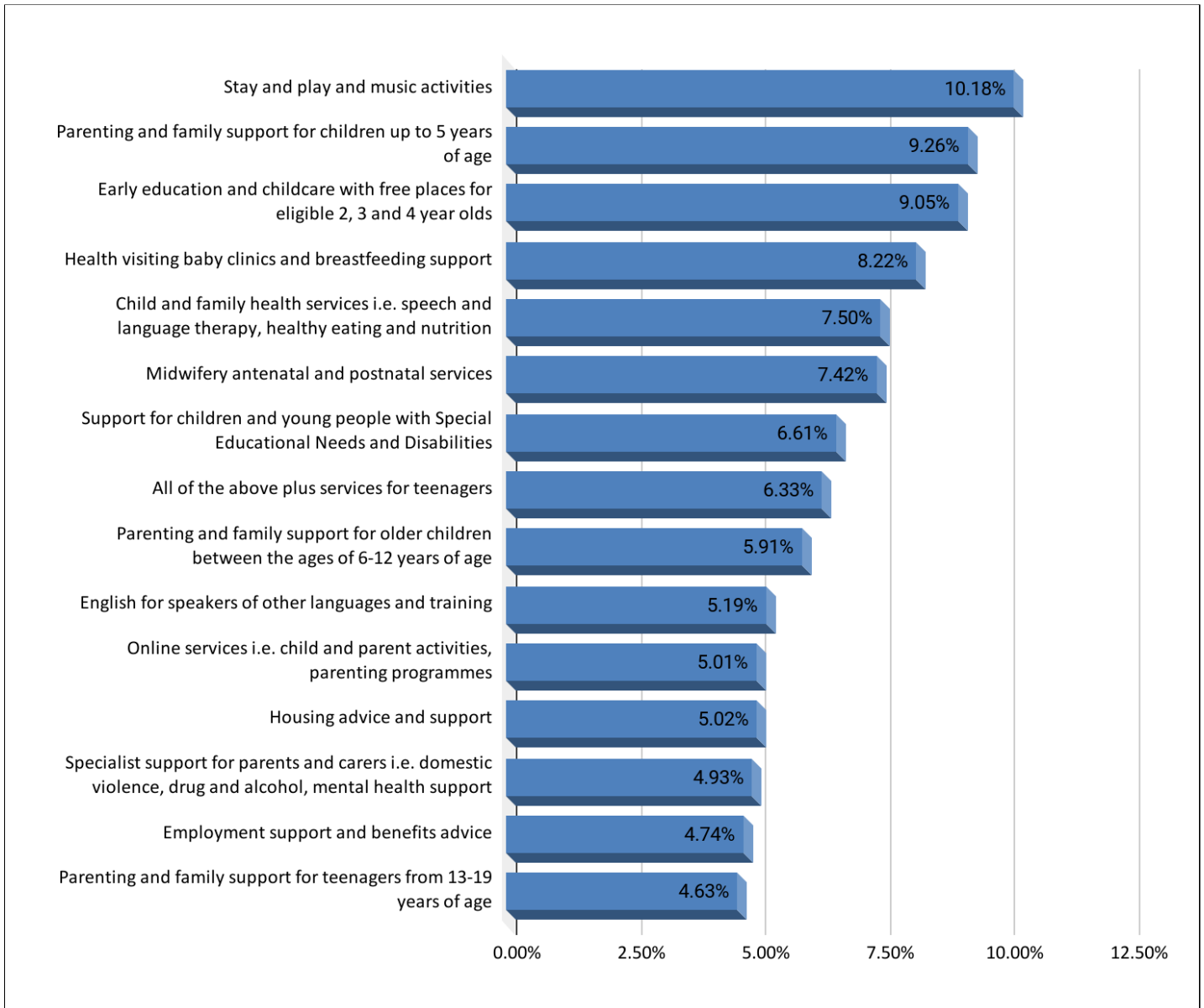


As the graph shows, 65% of professionals working in a children's centre felt that the proposals impact on them positively. 67% of respondents working as a health professional (eg. health visitor, GP, CAMHS professional) were ambivalent, choosing the neutral response option, neither positively or negatively. (this should be treated with caution due to small sample size).

46% of respondents that identified as a parent/carer/guardian and have used children's centres felt that the proposals would impact on them positively, with 33% of the view that it would impact on them negatively.

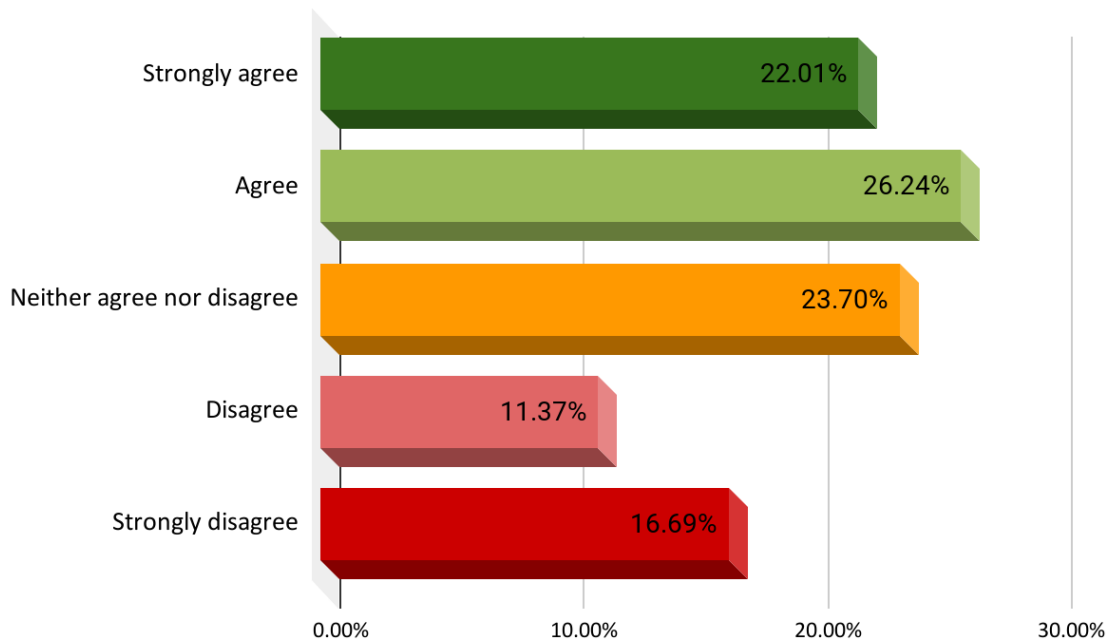
The greatest level of concern about the proposals was shown by prospective parents/carers/guardians, with 63% feeling that the proposals would impact on them negatively.

Question 7: If the ‘children and family’ hub proposal was to go ahead, please indicate which services you would like to see continued in the hub? (please tick all that apply)



As the graph above shows, the most popular services that respondents would like to see in the proposed ‘children and family’ hub are: ‘Stay and play and music activities’, (10%), followed by parenting and family support for children up to 5 years of age (9%) and “Early education and childcare with free places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?

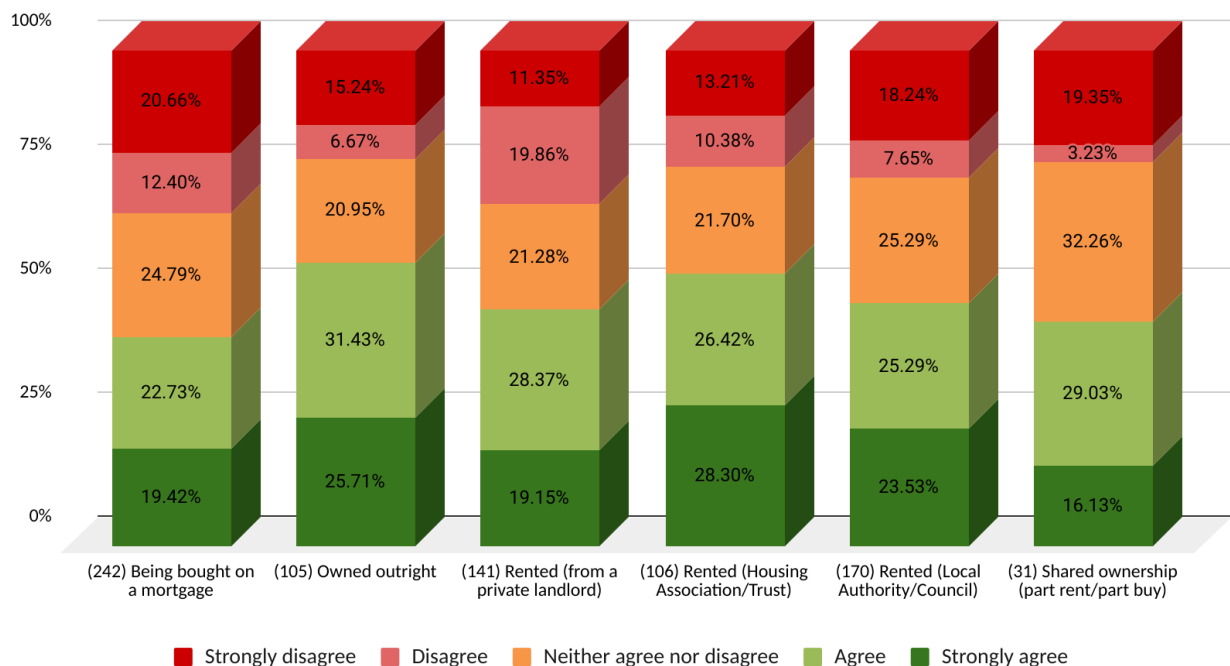


Base (827)

As the graph shows, nearly half of respondents (48%) agree (strongly agree/ agree) with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years.

Analysis by housing tenure

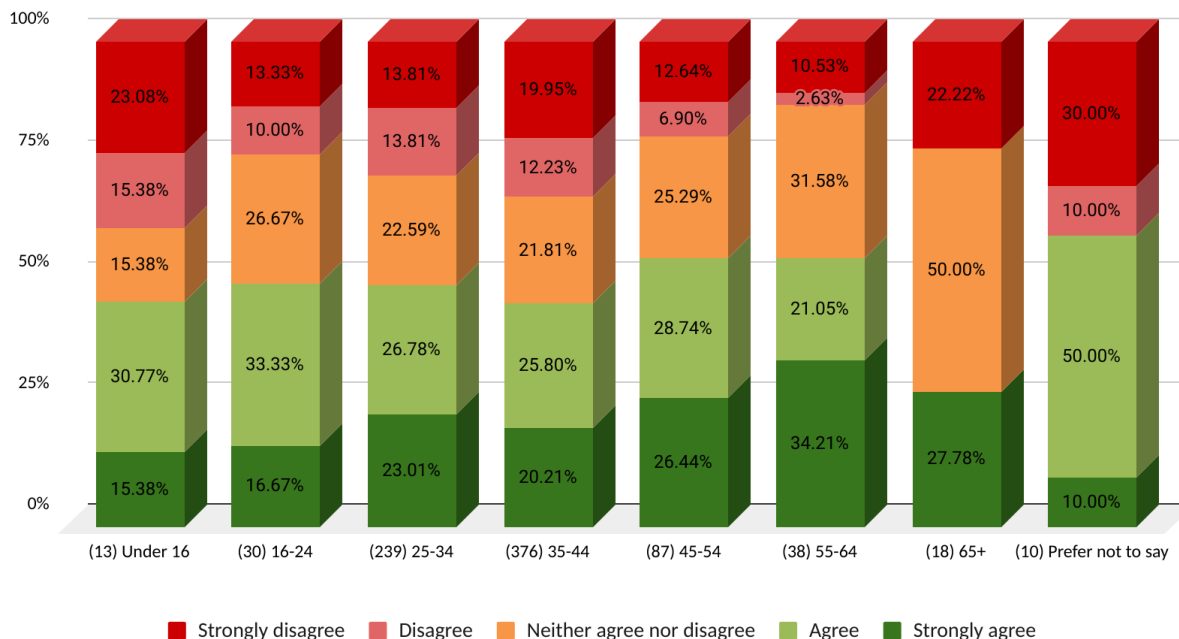
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Housing Tenure (Base 795)



As the graph shows, there's broad agreement across housing tenure with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years.

Analysis by age

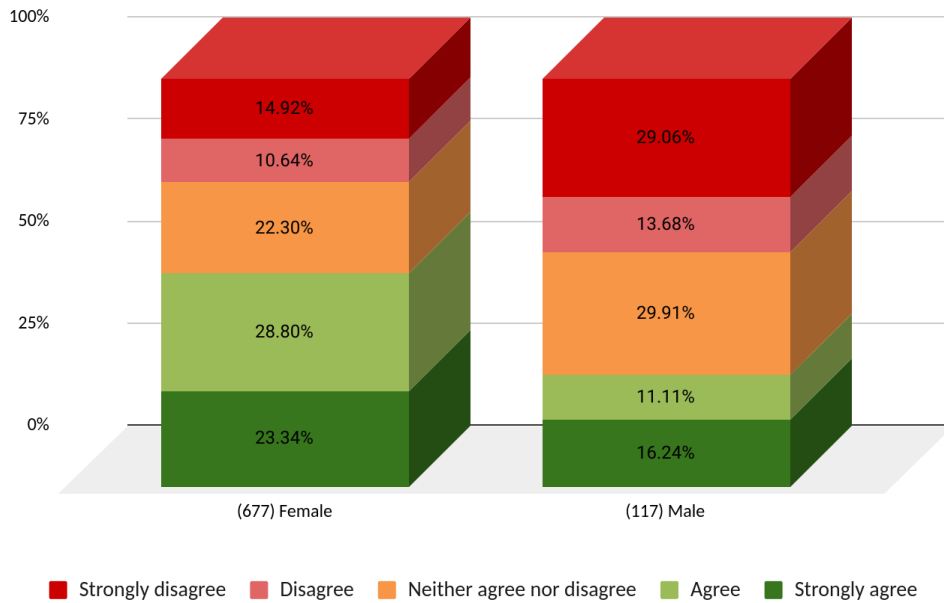
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Age group (Base 811)



As the graph above shows, there's broad agreement across the different age profiles with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years. 50% of those aged 16-24 agreed with the proposal whilst 23% disagreed. This is followed by 50% of those aged 25-34 agreed with the proposal, whilst 28% disagreed.

Analysis by gender

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Gender (Base 794)

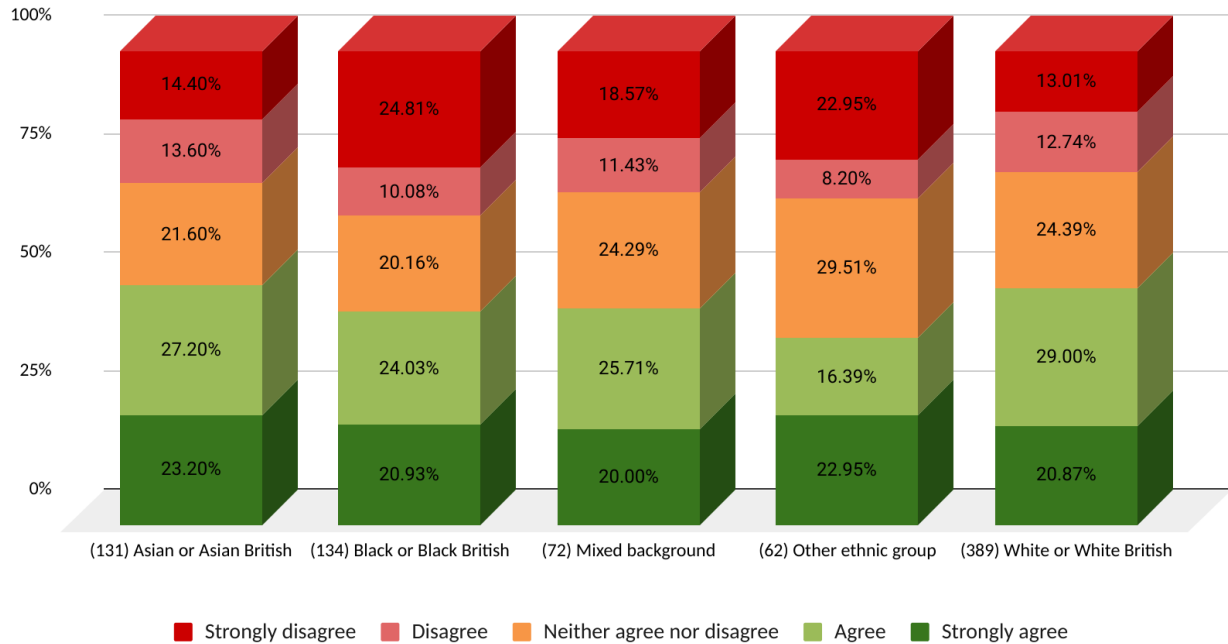


52% of female respondents agreed with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, with 26% disagreeing with the proposal.

In contrast **43% of male respondents disagreed** with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, with 27% agreeing with the proposal.

Analysis by ethnicity

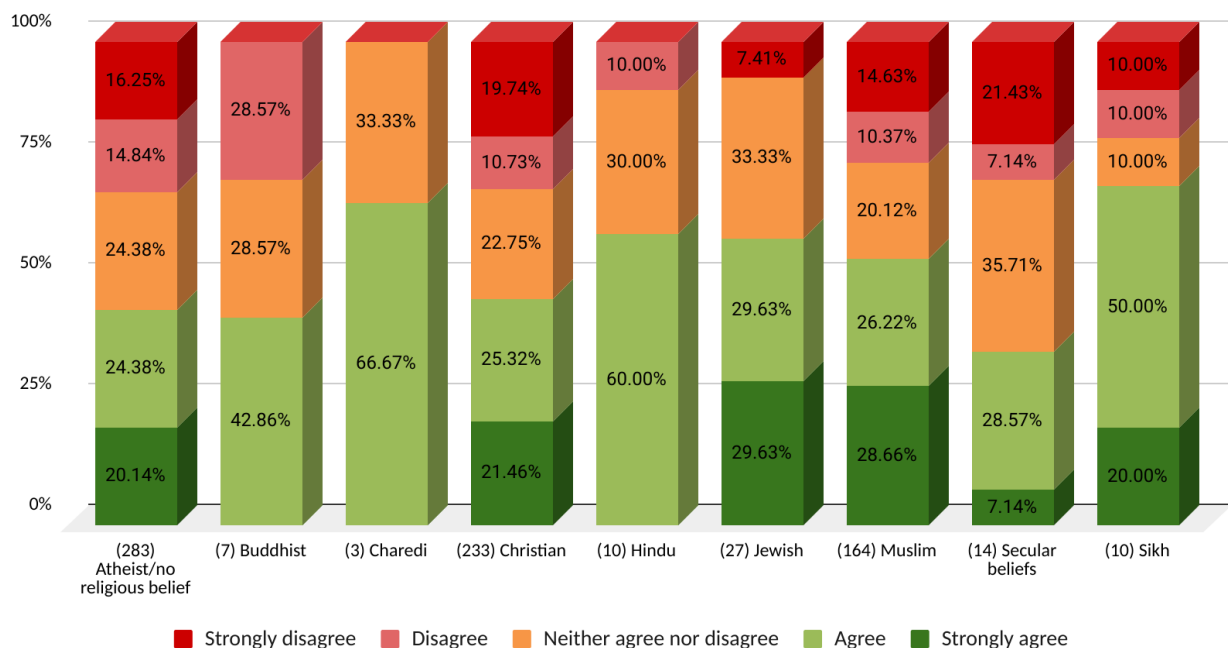
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Ethnicity (Base 788)



As the graph shows, a greater proportion of respondents agree with the proposal irrespective of their ethnicity.

Analysis by religion

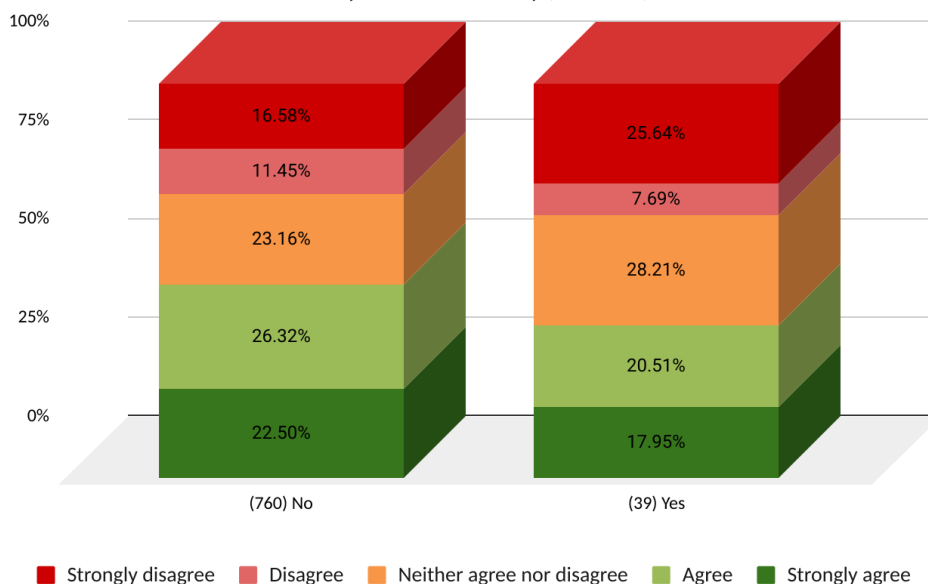
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Religion (Base 751)



As the graph shows, a greater proportion of respondents agree with the proposal irrespective of their religious beliefs.

Analysis by disability

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Disability (Base 799)

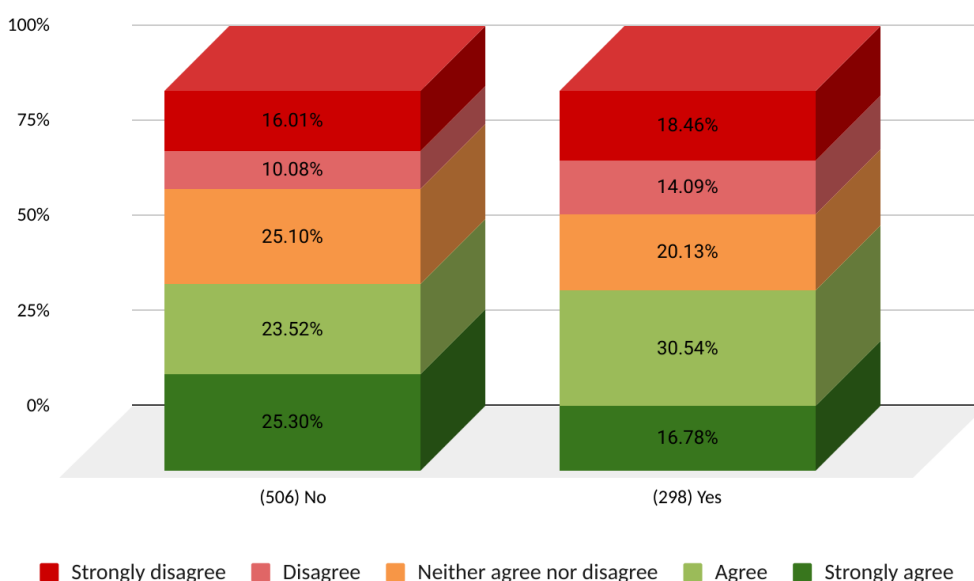


Nearly half of respondents without a disability (49%), agreed with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years of age, whilst 28% disagreed. In contrast, 39% of those with a disability agreed with the proposal whilst 34% disagreed.

Pregnancy/ maternity status

49% of those who weren't pregnant or had been on maternity leave over the last years agreed with the idea of youth hubs working alongside the 'children and family' hubs. Similarly, 48% of pregnant women or those who'd recently been pregnant agreed with the proposal.

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Pregnancy/Maternity (Base 804)

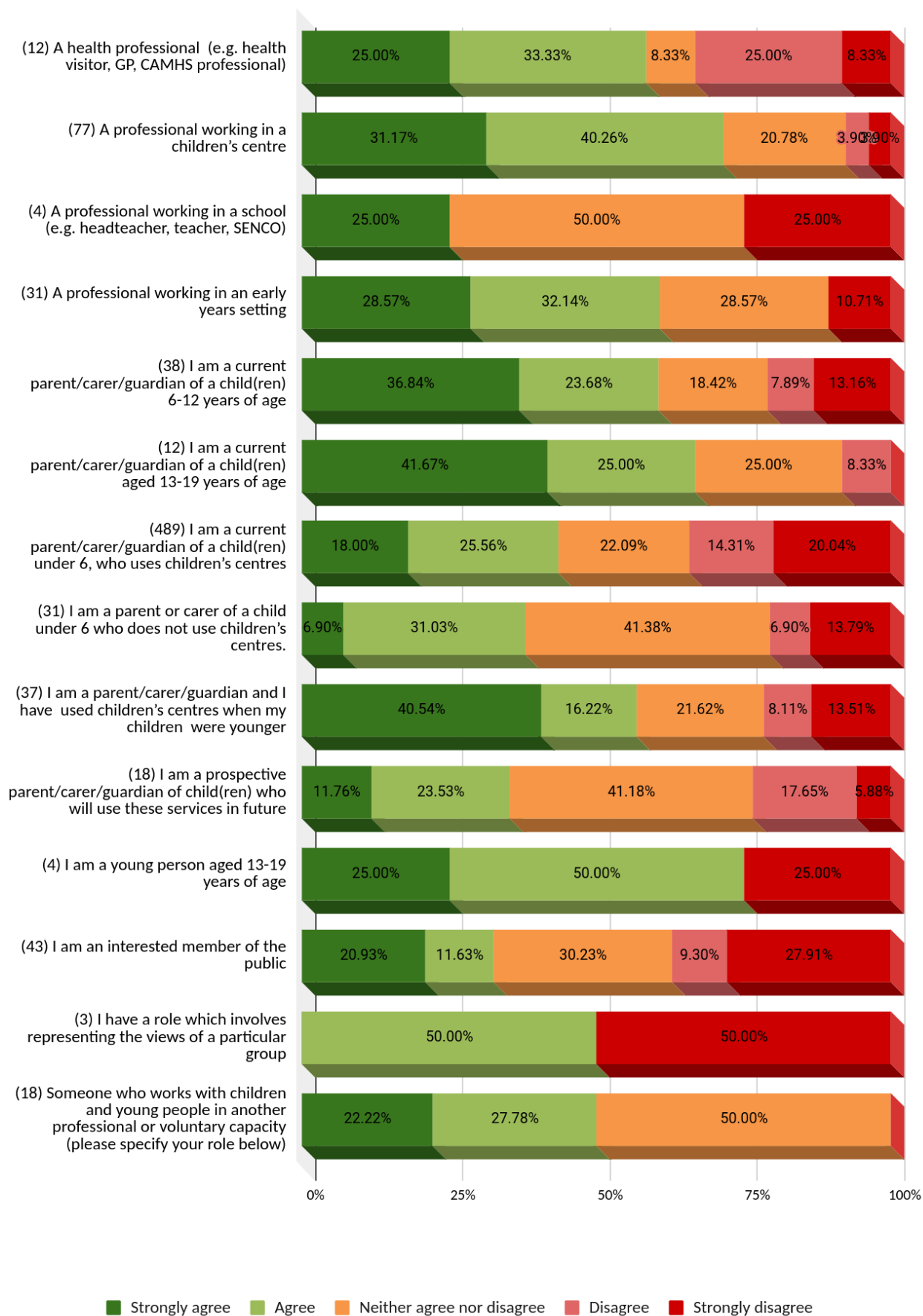


Analysis by interest in the consultation

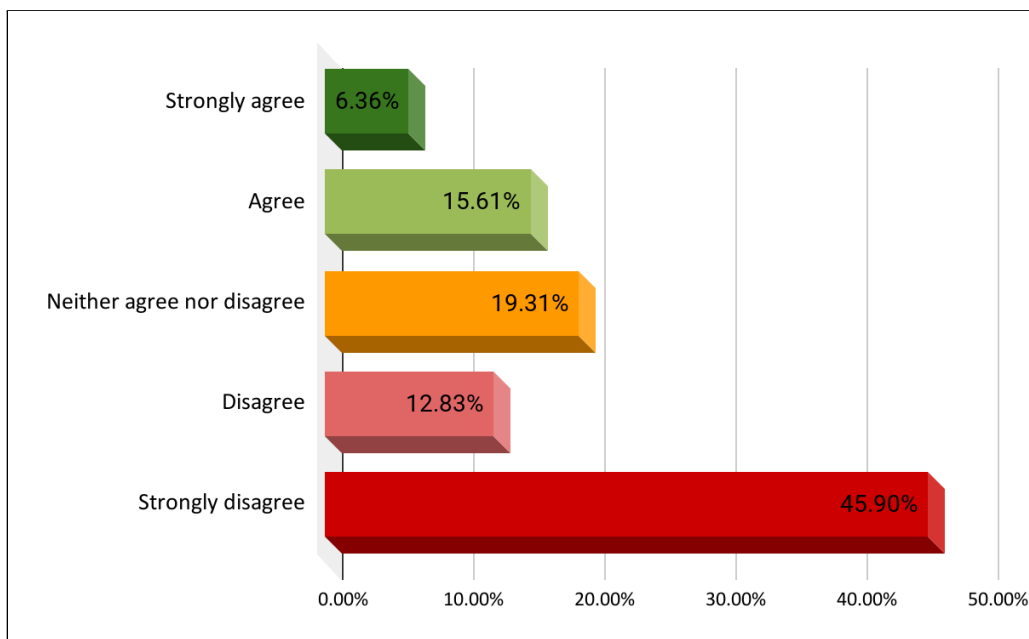
There is a broad level of agreement with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs to provide joined up support for families with children up to 19 years of age.

71% of professionals working in a children's centre agree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family' hubs, whilst 8% disagree. Similarly, 75% of young people that responded agreed with the proposal, with 25% disagreeing (caveat - treat with caution due to small sample size).

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?" vs Interest (Base 810)



Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?

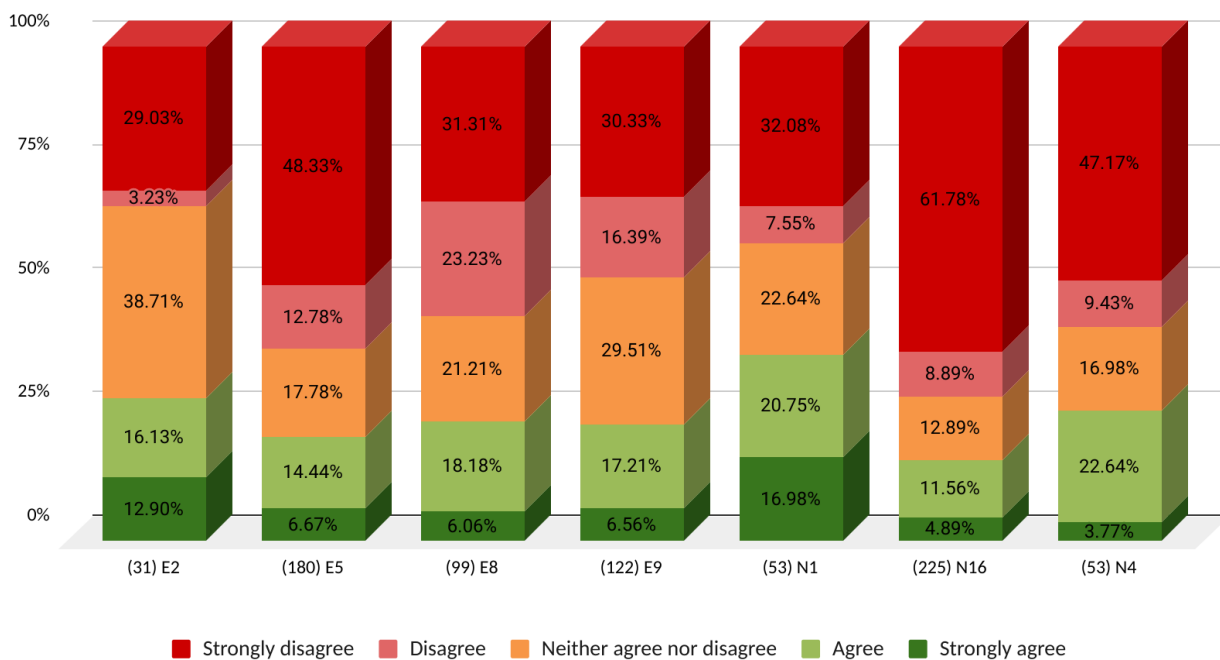


Base (865)

59% of respondents disagree with the principle of closing the two children’s centres, whilst 22% agree with the proposal.

Analysis by postcode

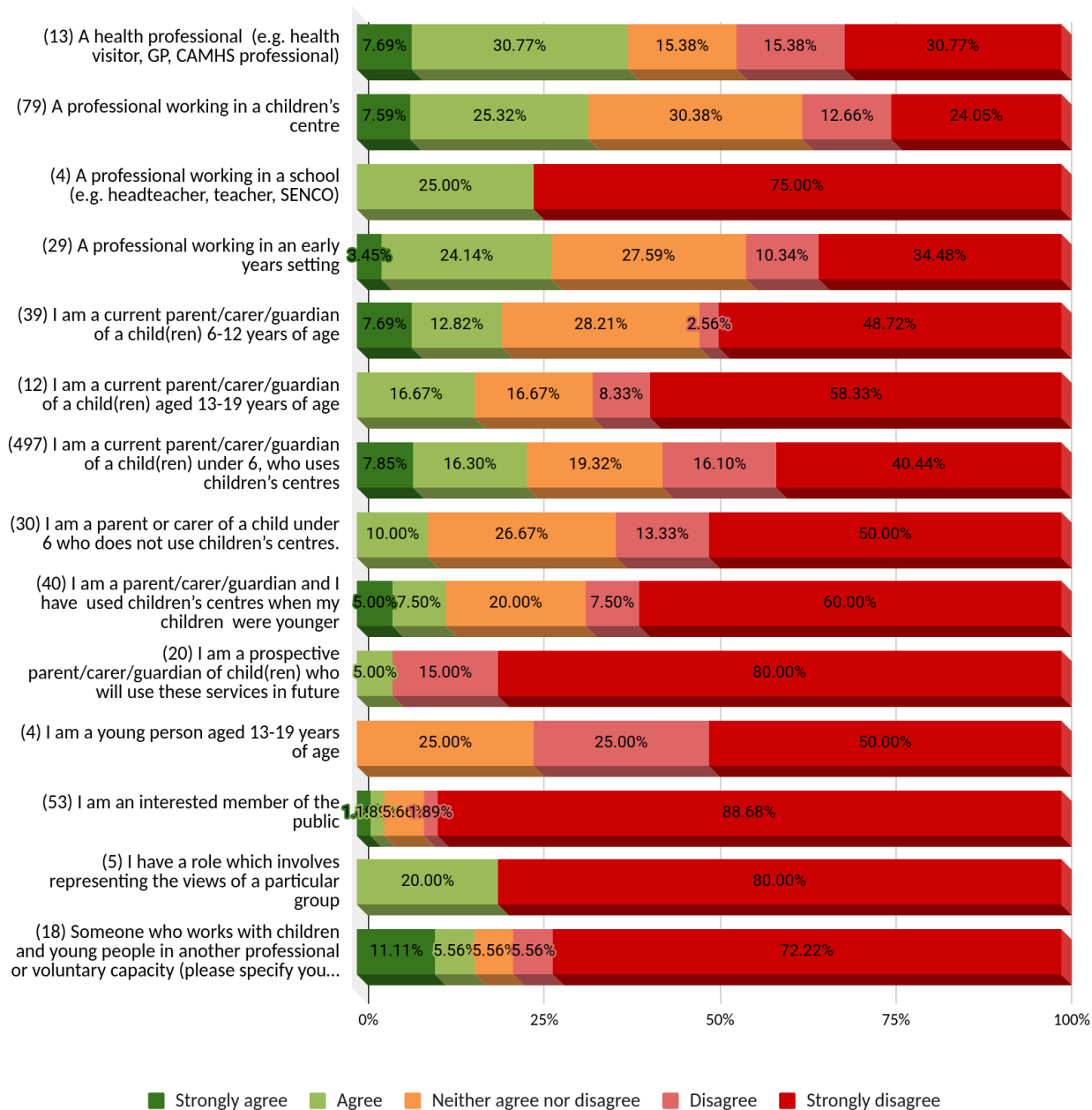
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Postcode (Base 763)



As the graph shows, the greatest level of opposition to the proposal are from those living in the N16 postcode area, with 71% disagreeing with the proposal, whilst 17% were in agreement. The N16 postcode area is indicative of those living closest to the centres proposed for closure.

Analysis by interest in the consultation

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Interest (Base 843)

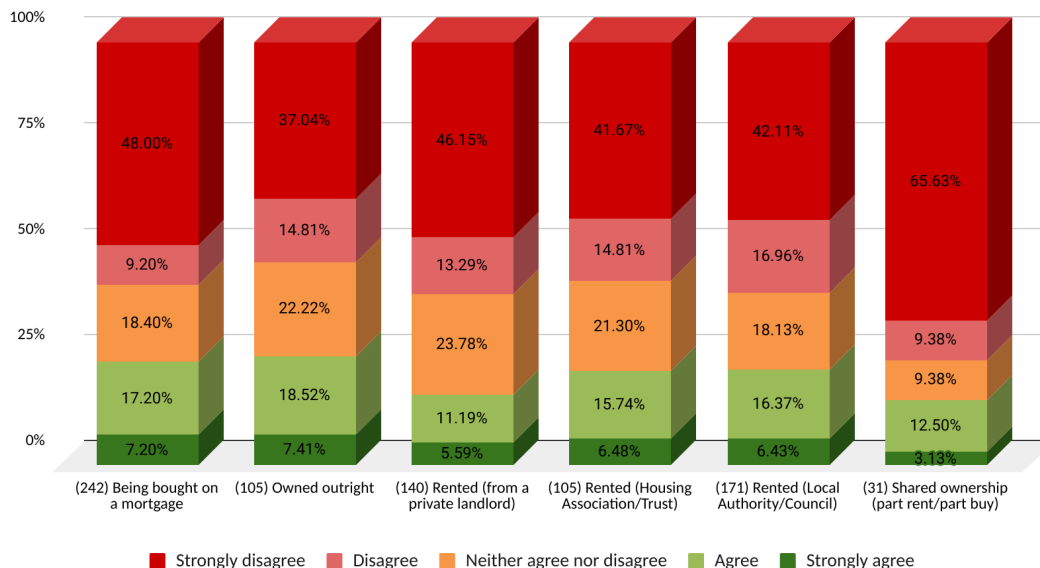


As the graph shows, there's a high level of opposition to the proposal irrespective of the interest in the consultation. The highest level of opposition(95%), is from prospective parents/carers/guardians of children who will use children's centres in future.

Analysis by housing tenure

There's a general level of disagreement with the principle of closing the two centres by residents across all housing tenures.

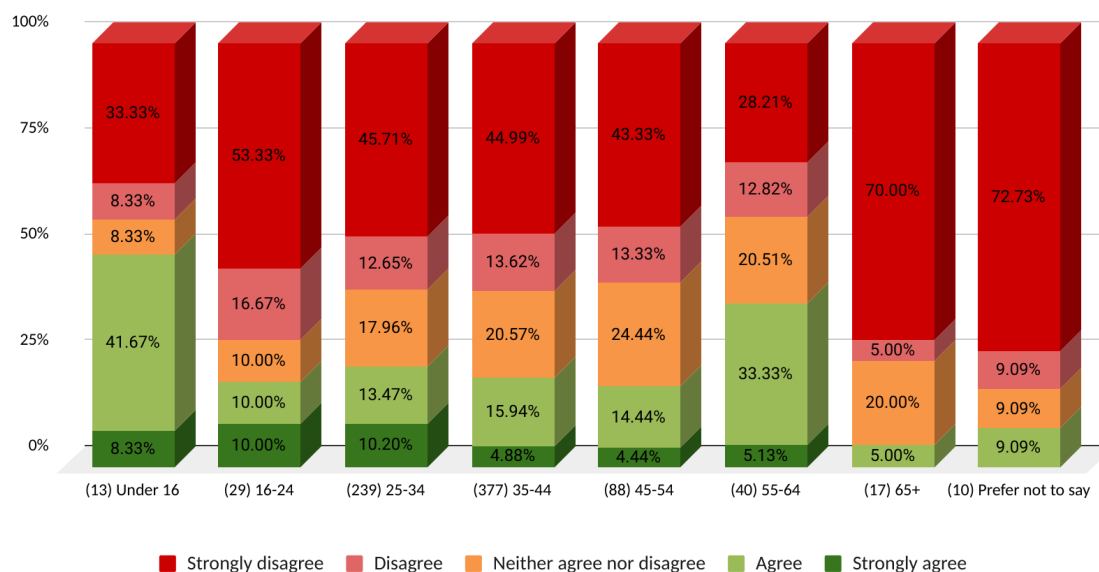
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Housing Tenure (Base 812)



Analysis by age

There is broad disagreement with the principle of closing the two centres across all the age profiles, with the exception of those under 16 where 50% agreed with the proposed closure, whilst 41% disagreed.

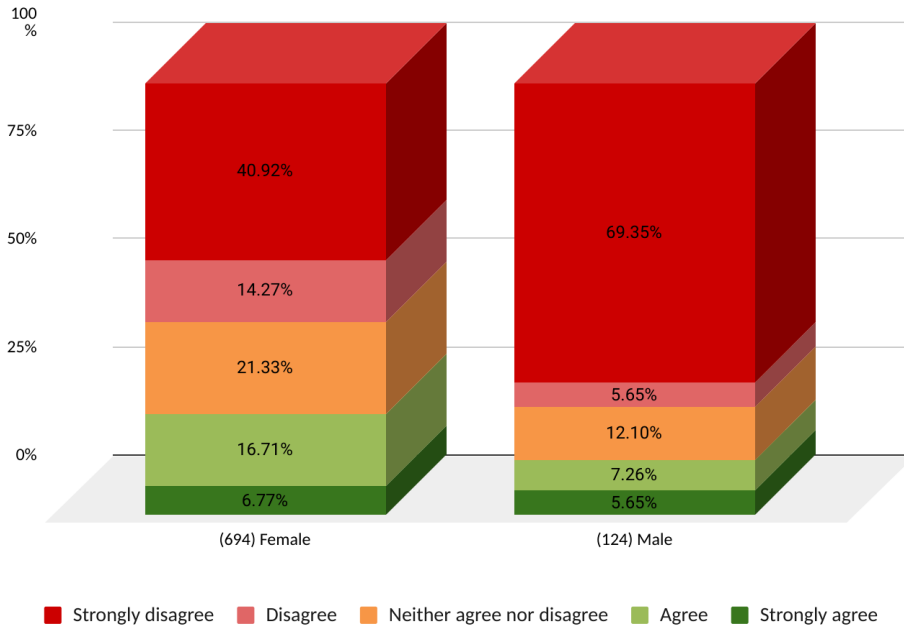
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Age group (Base 836)



Analysis by gender

A greater proportion of male respondents (75%), disagree with the principle of closing the two centres, compared with female respondents where 55% disagree.

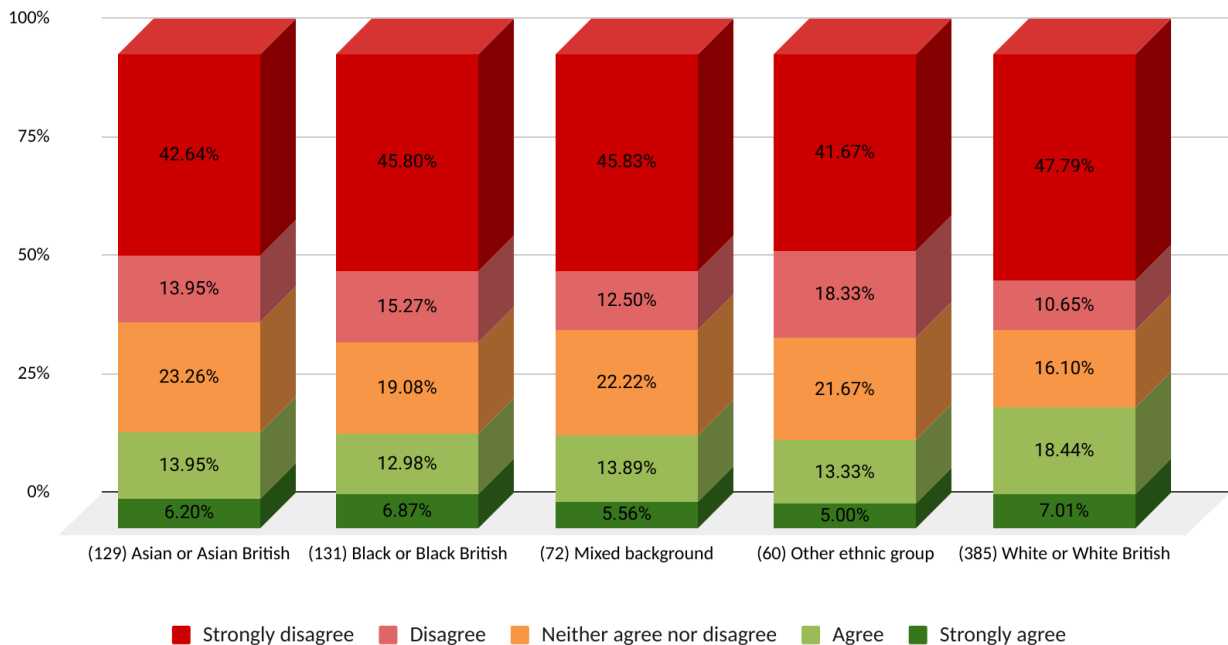
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Gender (Base 818)



Analysis by ethnicity

There is broad opposition to the proposal across all ethnicity profiles.

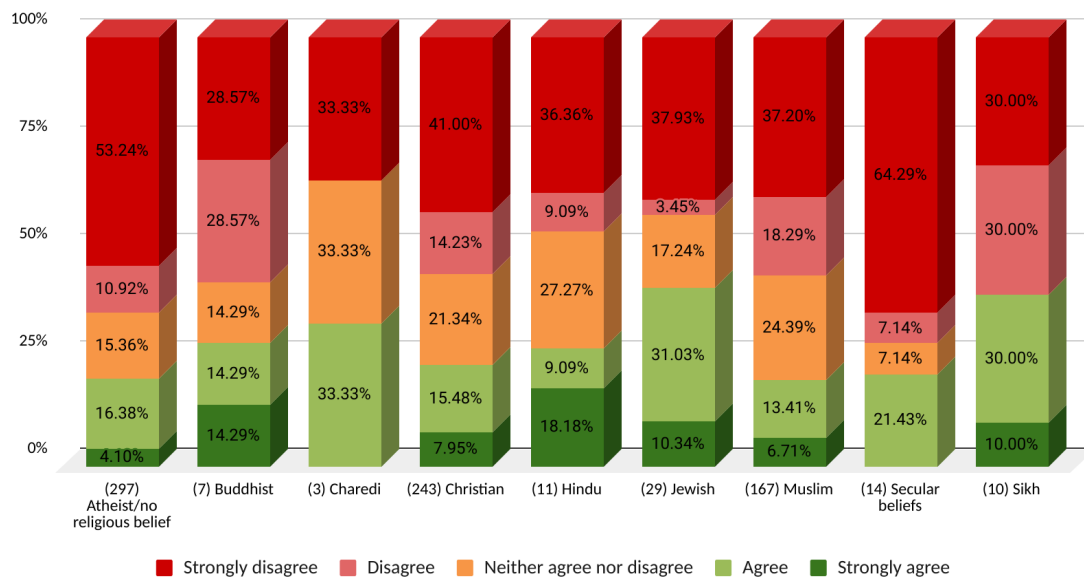
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Ethnicity (Base 777)



Analysis by religion

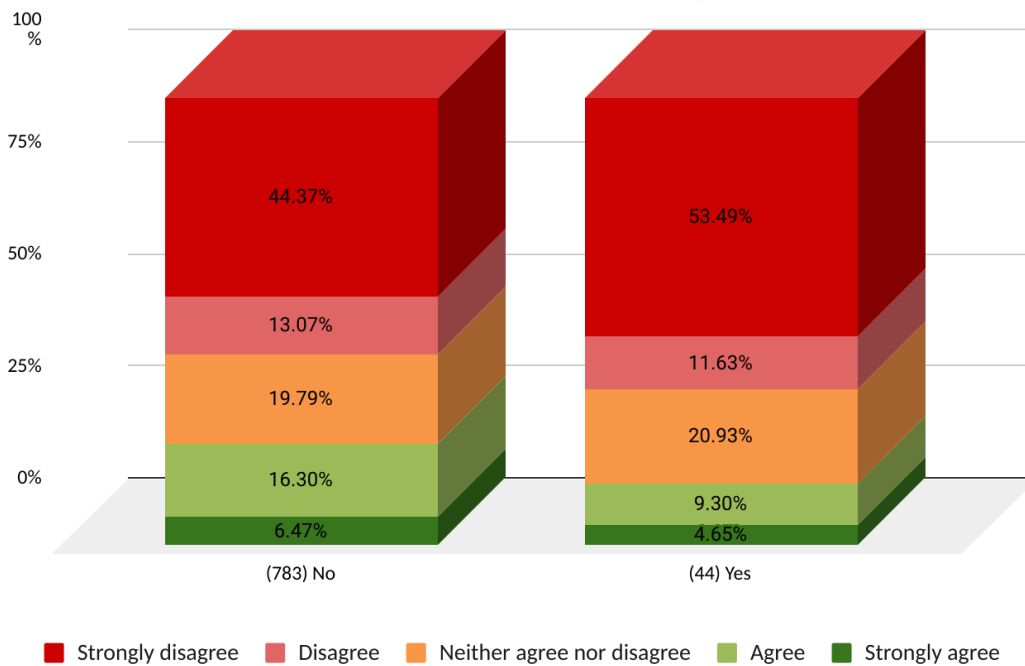
There is a higher level of opposition to the proposal from those that indicated that they have secular beliefs (71%), Charedi (66%) and those that have Atheist/no religious beliefs (63%).

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Religion (Base 781)



Analysis by disability

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Disability (Base 816)

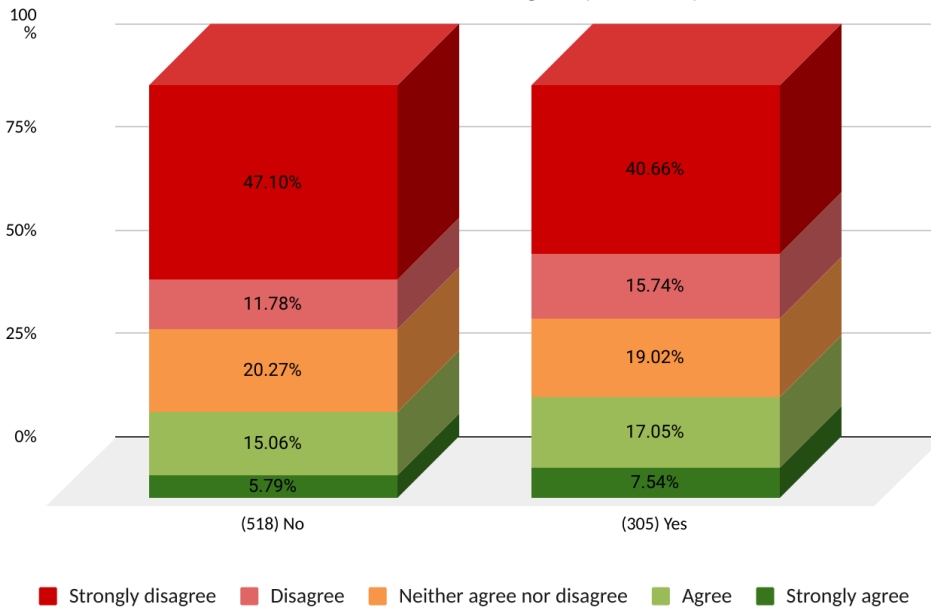


Respondents with and without disabilities disagreed with the principle of closure, 65% and 57% respectively.

Pregnancy/ maternity status

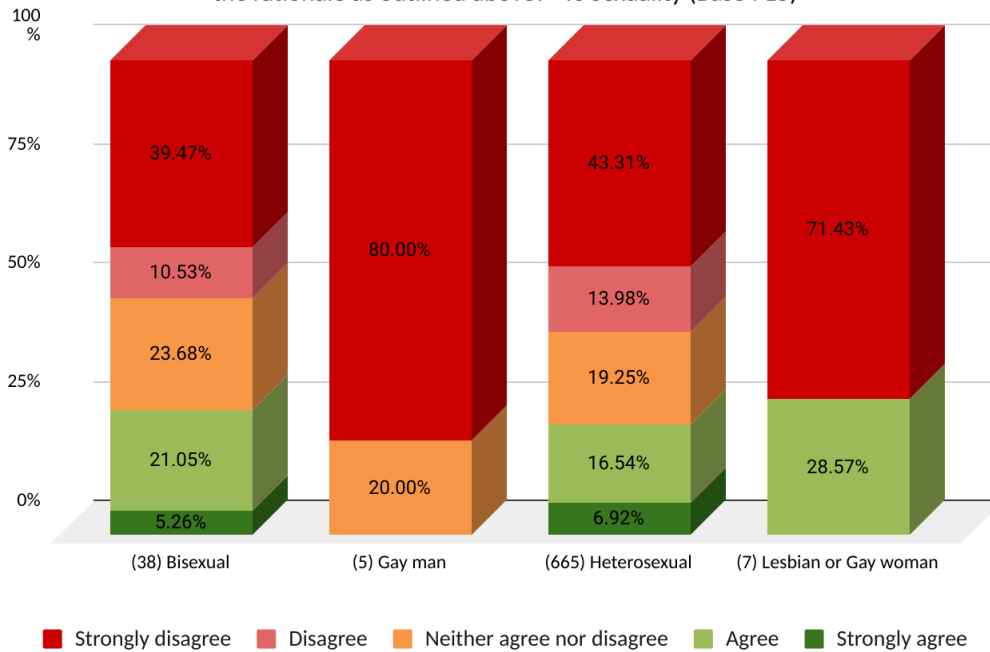
57% of the respondents that were pregnant or had accessed maternity services in the last two years disagreed with the proposed closure of the two centres. Similarly 59% of those who weren't pregnant or had been on maternity leave over the two last years disagreed with the proposal to close the two centres.

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Pregnancy/Maternity (Base 823)



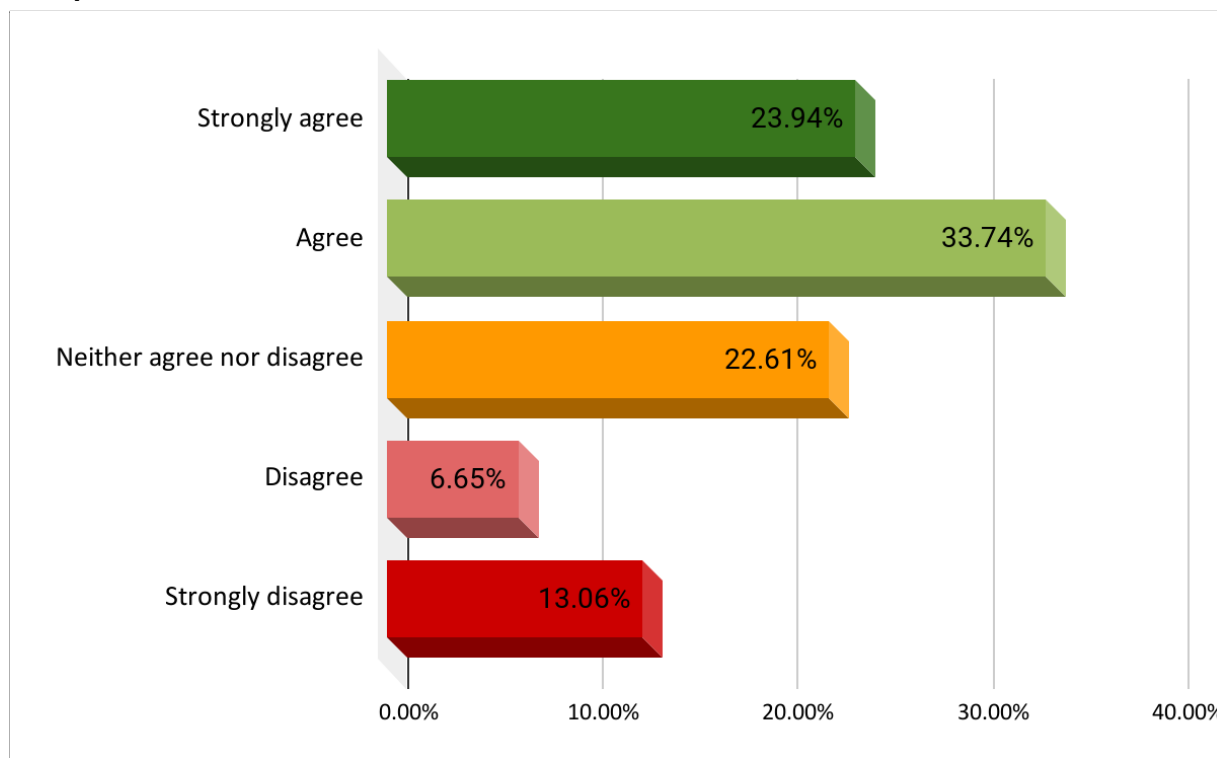
Sexual orientation

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?" vs Sexuality (Base 715)



80% of respondents that indicated that they're a 'gay man' disagreed with the proposal and similarly 71% of those that identified as a 'Lesbian or Gay woman' also disagreed with the proposed closures. (Please treat this with caution due to the small sample sizes).

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?



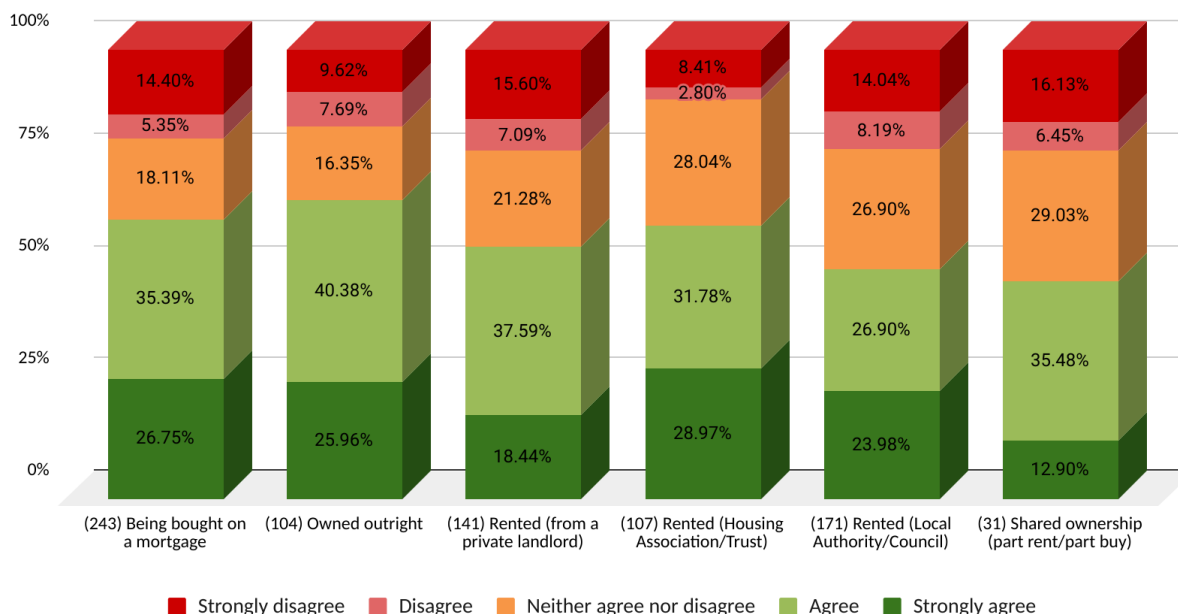
Base (827)

As the graph shows, 58% agreed with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', whilst 20% disagreed with the proposal.

Analysis by housing tenure

There is broad support by respondents across all housing tenures for the proposal to develop two year 'early years hubs, with the highest level of support from those that own their homes outright (66%).

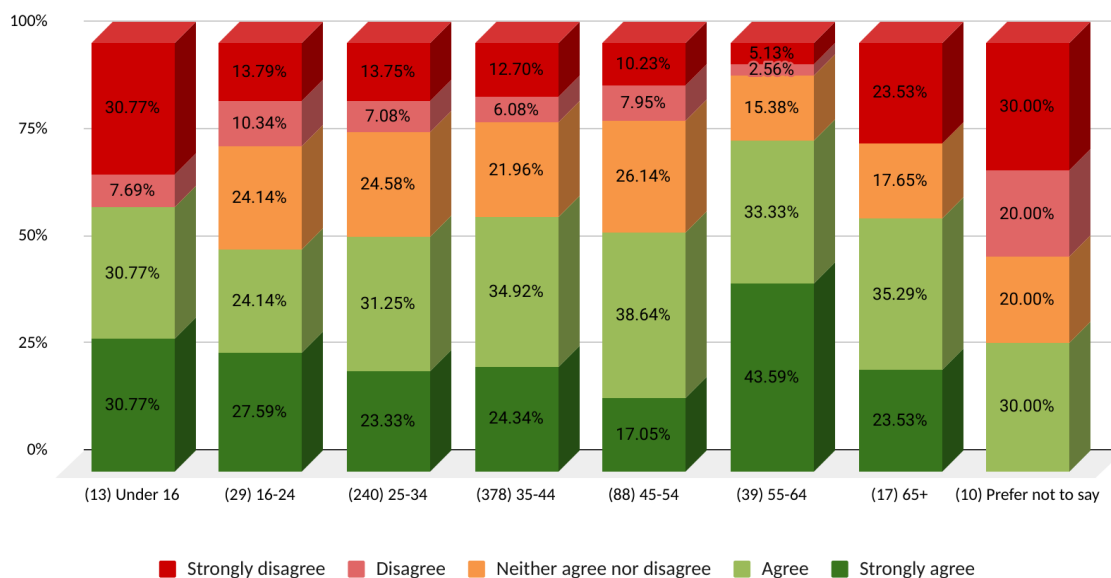
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?" vs Housing Tenure (Base 797)



Analysis by age

A greater proportion of respondents across all age groups support the proposal to develop two early years hubs. There is a greater level of support is by those aged 55 to 74, with 77% of respondents in this age cohort supporting the proposal.

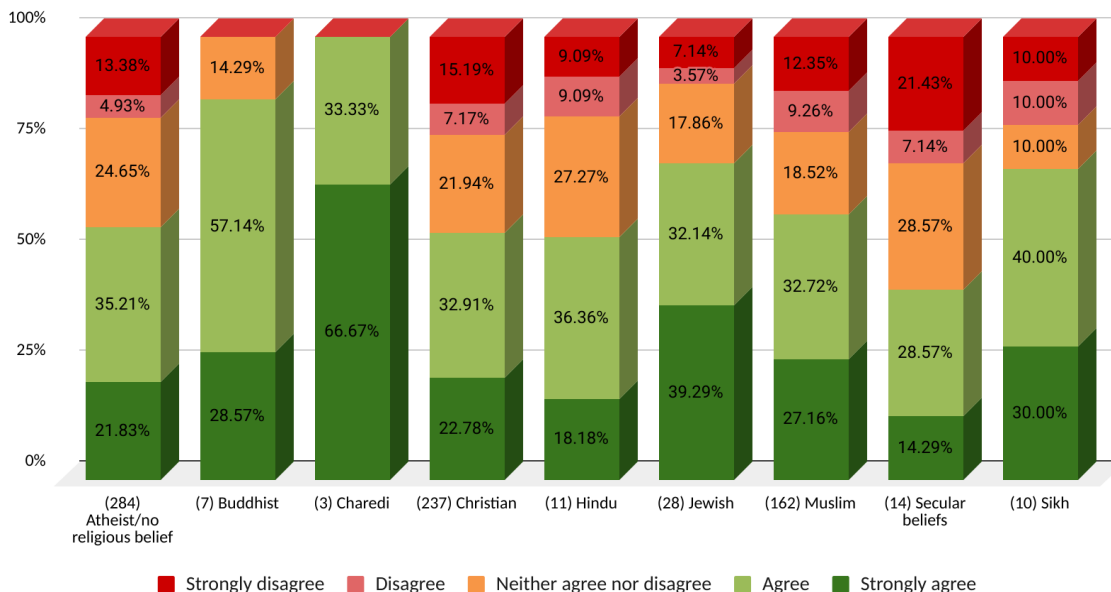
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?" vs Age group (Base 814)



Analysis by religion

There is significant support for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs' by respondents across all religious persuasions, with the highest level of support from Charedi (99%) and Jewish (71%).

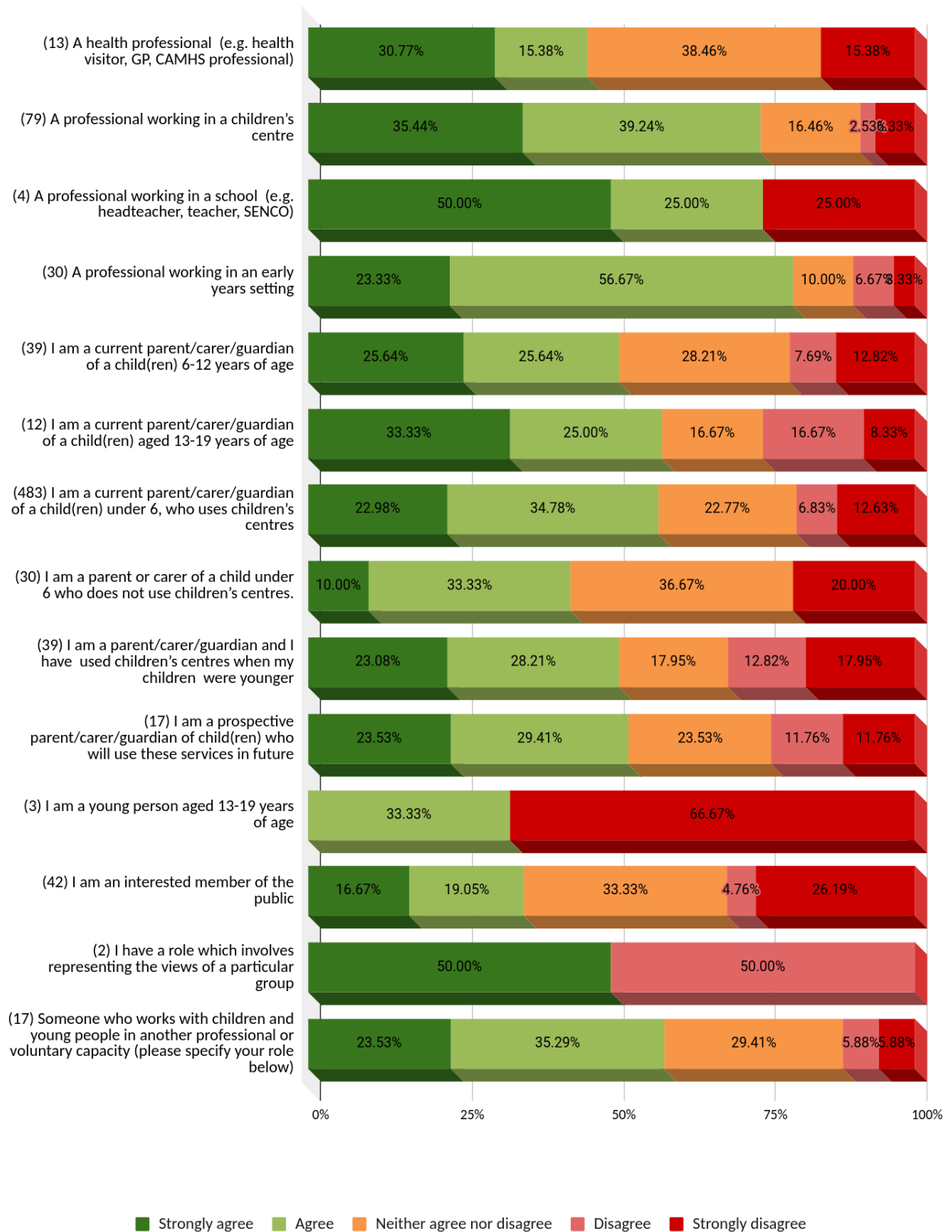
"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?" vs Religion (Base 756)



Analysis by interest in the consultation

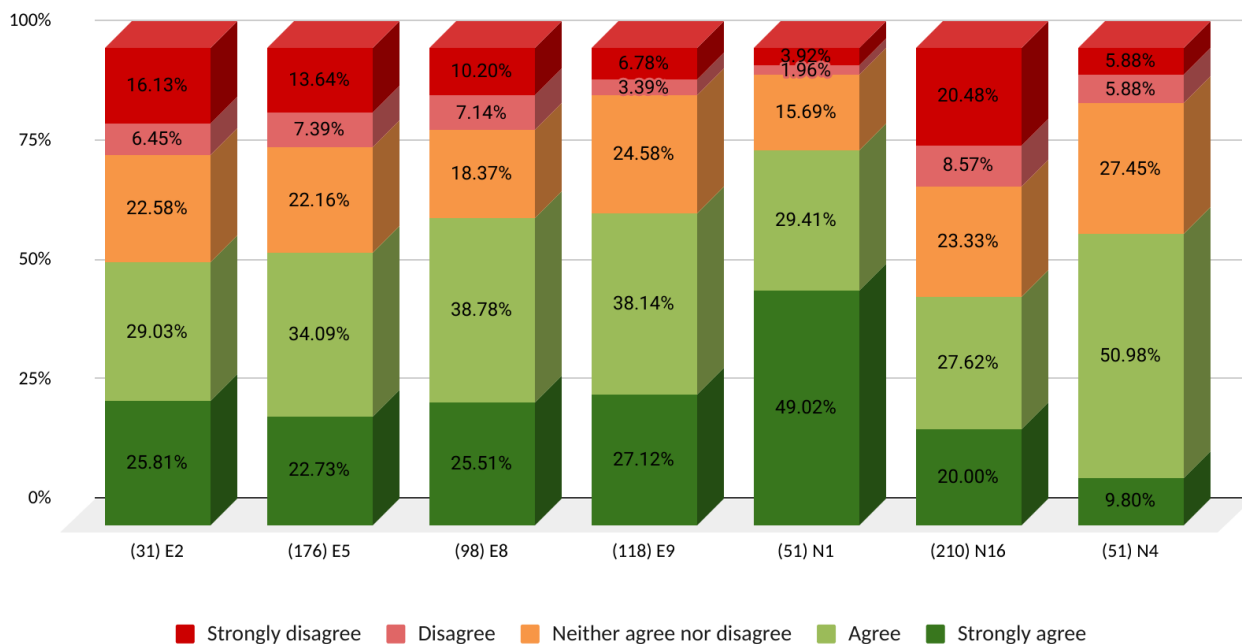
There is a high level of support to the proposal to develop two 'early years' hubs, with 80% of those that work in an early years setting agreeing with the proposal, followed by 75% of respondents that indicated that they work in a school

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?" vs Interest (Base 810)



Analysis by postcode area

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?" vs Postcode (Base 735)



As the graph shows, the greatest support for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs' is from respondents in the N1 postcode area (78%) and the lowest level of support from those in the N16 postcode area (48%).

Open ended comments received to the survey

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency 'children and family' hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old? - Please explain your response above:

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments in support of their response.

We received 435 comments in response to the question above.

The majority of comments to the question relates to the proposed closure of Hillside and Fernbank children's centres, explaining why they disagreed with the proposed closures.

The comments received have been analysed thematically and the emerging themes quantified as shown below:

<u>Themes - Disagreement comments</u>	Count
Disagree- Keep facilities separate (for older and young children)	53
Disagree- Change in specific nursery/ early years support- watered down services	48
Disagree - Unsure how changes will work/need more information	35
Disagree- Against any centre closure	26
Disagree - Safety concerns relating to young adults sharing spaces with young babies and children	24
Disagree- Fernbank closure	18
Disagree- Inadequate alternative service provision	16
Disagree- Lack of options for parents	16
Disagree- Impact on early years support/specific support needed for teenagers & older children	15
Disagree- focus on 0-5 years	15
Disagree- Key service in the community	14
Disagree- Alternative solution needed than what is proposed	13
Disagree- Nursery capacity- Extra pressure on existing services	12
Disagree- Increase of inequality & division	12
Disagree- inadequate consultation process	12
Disagree- childcare costs	10
Disagree - impact on nursery staff (at Hillside, Fernbank and other centres)	10
Disagree with proposed Hillside closure	9
Disagree - impact on other centres	7
Disagree- Can't access alternative locations	5
Disagree- more services/ spending on services	5
Disagree- Covid 19- Maintaining safety	3
Disagree- Social-emotional impact on children	3
<u>Themes - Agreement comments</u>	Count
Agree- helpful for families with older children/children of mixed ages	54

Agree- Increased access/ better services for all ages	40
Agree - support suited for older children/ children of mixed ages	28
Agree- Streamline services	14
Agree with proposal	12
Agree-As long as the quality of the current early years service is maintained	9
Agree- Alternative solution needed than what is proposed	7
Agree- benefit community	3
Agree - Opportunity to meet older children/young people	3
Agree - if age-based services are separated appropriately	2

Emails received during the consultation period

Residents were provided with the opportunity to provide additional comments to the consultation by emailing consultation@hackney.gov.uk

We received 69 emails to the consultation inbox. The majority of comments received related to the proposed closure of Hillside and Fernbank Children's centres.

Key stakeholder responses

We received a detailed response from **Overview and Scrutiny**, which is classed as a key stakeholder response and has been linked below. The letter summarised representations Scrutiny has received from parent representatives.

The response highlighted a variety of issues, a synopsis of the substantive points have been summarised below. For greater detail, please refer to the [detailed letter from Overview and Scrutiny](#), which is also appended to this report.

- Parent representatives felt that the consultation timeframe of 8 weeks was insufficient and felt should have been longer - 12 weeks as has happened with other boroughwide consultations
- It was noted that the information provided in the consultation was clear and easy to understand, however information such as the parental survey, childcare sufficiency assessment and the evidence to support the closure of the centres hadn't been included as part of the consultation. Consultees felt that they needed this information to provide meaningful feedback to the consultation.
- Parent representatives also queried the decision to consult on the Early Years' Strategy and the proposed closure of the children's centres at the same time. They felt that as Cabinet approved the Early Years Strategy on 13th September, it was felt that it wasn't noted that this

strategy was in draft format, thus leading to confusion as to why there was a requirement to consult on a strategy that had already been agreed by cabinet members.

- Consultees felt that two separate decision making processes had been conflated by including the strategy and children's centres closures in one consultation.
- Consultees questioned why alternatives to the closure of the children's centres hadn't been included. They felt that mitigations that had been offered for the proposed closure of the two children's centres weren't appropriate because children's centres are unique and aren't comparable to other childcare and nursery settings.

Save Fernbank & Hillside campaign group

A response to the consultation was received from the ["Save Fernbank & Hillside" campaign group, made up of parents and the local community](#) campaigning to stop the proposed closures of Fernbank and Hillside children's centres. The campaign group comments have been highlighted in the summary detailed below:

Emails from residents/ service users

All the emails sent to the consultation inbox related to the proposed closure of Fernbank and Hillside children's centres.

The emails all generally followed a similar format, highlighting the detrimental impact that the proposed closures would have on how they (parents, carers and users) them and their children.

Generally the emails highlighted the fact that the proposed closure would:

Economic impacts/ increased costs for parents

- The centres proposed for closure both include subsidised nurseries providing affordable childcare, thus having a detrimental impact on lower income families and particularly on working mothers, some of whom would be unable to work as a result.
- Respondents felt that the proposed closures would make it impossible for them to have access to the 30 hours free childcare they're entitled to, as these are often over-subscribed.
- Respondents felt that the remaining centres don't have affordable childcare places, leading to them having to pay more per month to access childcare.

Staff in children's centres

- Criticism of the fact that staff working at the centres found out about the consultation through the local press rather than directly from the Early Years' Service.
- Proposed changes could lead to a loss of good quality experience staff, leading to a negative impact on the care that children receive at the centres.

Consultation process

- Residents using the two centres proposed for closure were critical of the fact that they received an email to tell them about the proposals, which they felt was abrupt and without warning
- Criticism of the fact that the consultation did not provide an open ended box for them to provide verbatim comments to the proposed closures; which they subsequently did through emailing the consultation inbox.
- There was a perception by consultees that the questions posed in the consultation were leading respondents to respond in favour of the proposed closures.
- Length of the consultation seen as not long enough, as it is
- 8 week consultation seen as insufficient and should have been 12 weeks in keeping with best practice in public consultation
- Consultees queried the process used to seek the views of relevant stakeholders, beyond the letter sent to parents inviting them to a one hour meeting.
- Criticism of the fact that on 13th September Hackney Today published an article about the proposed closures prior to that evening's Cabinet meeting where the Cabinet approved the Early Years Strategy, with the consultation launching two days later on 15th September. They felt that this led to lack of clarity on the scope to influence the proposals.

Evidence to support the proposed closures

Consultees were felt that there was insufficient evidence presented to justify the proposed closures

- Council's justification that there are 5 centres within walking distance was seen as misleading. They felt that once the two centres closed, there would only remain one secular/ non-faith children's centre remaining
- Consultees felt that it was misleading to use pandemic vacancy rates to justify the proposed closures, as the footfall to those centres would be lower due to safety concerns related to Covid-19.
- Consultees felt that there was no evidence that alternative options to the proposed closures had been explored.
- Consultees also felt that the data and evidence in the rationale for the proposed closures was in-complete and misleading.
- Consultees criticised the fact that an equality impact assessment of the proposed closures wasn't included as part of the consultation

Suggestions/ alternatives to closure

- The option of fundraising to raise money to keep the centres open was suggested by some respondents as an option.
- Halt the proposed closures as the process was seen as unfairly targeting users of those centres
- Consultees suggested that the Council should commit to protecting subsidised childcare places and children's centres

Notes from meetings held during the consultation period

As part of the consultation, the Early Years service wrote to all current users of the two centres proposed for closure, letting them know about the consultation and encouraging them to respond to the consultation.

Meetings were held at Fernbank and Hillside to provide parents of enrolled children the opportunity to raise questions. A third meeting for Fernbank and Hillside parents was held at Oldhill children's centre.

A summary of the common themes raised in all three meetings included:

- Vacancies and falling enrollment.
- Marketing of children's centres.
- 0-2 provision and baby room places.
- Challenges faced by parents searching for providers.
- Criticism of the proposal and consultation.

Fernbank children's centre parents meeting

The Fernbank Children's Centre parents' meeting took place on Wednesday 6th October, 2021. 23 attended the meeting.

The following key themes were discussed during the meeting:

- The deficit affecting children's centre services.
- Vacancies at children's centres in the borough, the occupancy rate at Fernbank and falling enrolment in primary school classes.
- Cost and travel implications for families seeking alternative child-care providers.
- The costs of leasing Fernbank.
- Marketing of Fernbank. Attendees asked whether Fernbank could be marketed more effectively to reduce vacancy numbers. Parents commented that they had previously been unaware of Fernbank.
- Attendees raised criticism of the consultation process.
- Attendees commented on the 0-2 spaces and baby rooms available at Fernbank and Hillside. Parents asked whether baby rooms would be opened at other centres.
- Attendees raised concerns about the impact of centre closures on staff.

Hillside children's centre parents meeting

The Hillside Children's Centre parents' meeting took place on Thursday 7th October, 2021. 19 attended the meeting.

The following key themes were discussed during the meeting:

- The need for savings and the reasoning for the proposal for Early Years Strategy & Children's Centres proposal.
- Falling enrolment and vacancies at children's centres.
- Subsidies. Attendees raised the question of reducing subsidies as an alternative to closing Hillside.

- Attendees commented on the impact of private-nursery costs.
- Re-evaluating the need for 0-2 spaces. Attendees asked whether there were alternative centres with baby room vacancies.
- Attendees commented on the impact of Covid-19 on child-care arrangements.
- Parents raised concerns about the impact of the centre closure on children's social development, how the Council would ensure a smooth transition for children and whether children and staff could be placed at alternative centres together for continuity of childcare.
- Marketing of Hillside and other children's centres. Attendees called for more advertising of centres and alternative options for families on waiting lists.

Oldhill School and children's centre meeting

The third parents meeting at Oldhill children's centre took place on Tuesday 9th November, 2021. 16 attended the meeting.

The following key themes were discussed during the meeting:

- Discussion of the proposal and the impact of the deficit.
- SEND provision.
- Attendees raised criticism of the consultation process.
- Attendees requested clarification on the reduction of enrollment and vacancy rate data.
- The marketing of children's centres, particularly Fernbank.
- Attendees questioned whether there were alternative funding options.
- Parents commented on the difficulty of finding suitable childcare providers, the high cost of private centres, and the benefits of Fernbank and Hillside.
- Attendees praised Fernbank and Hillside staff.

Four of the events were held during the consultation period as shown below:

- [Wednesday 6th October, 5pm to 6pm, Fernbank children's centre](#)
- [Tuesday 7th October, 5pm to 6pm, Hillside children's centre](#)
- [Monday 4th November, 1.30pm to 2.30pm, Shoreditch Trust](#)
- [Tuesday 8 November, 5pm to 6.45pm, Oldhill School and children's centre](#)

Conclusion

The Council's new Early Years Strategy underpinned the consultation and proposed changes to children's centres and launched for 9 weeks from 15th September to 16 November 2021.

879 responses were received to the consultation questionnaire and 69 emails were sent to consultation@hackney.gov.uk. 68 attended the 4 public meetings held during the consultation period.

There was **significant opposition to the proposal to close two children's centres**: Hillside and Fernbank.

- 59% of respondents disagreed with the principle of closing the two children's centres, whilst 22% agreed with the proposal.
- The greatest level of opposition to the proposal came from those living in the N16 postcode area, with 71% disagreeing with the proposal, whilst 17% were in agreement.
- The highest level of opposition (95%), is from prospective parents/carers/guardians of children who will use children's centres in future.
- 57% of the respondents that were pregnant or had accessed maternity services in the last two years disagreed with the proposed closure of the two centres. Similarly 65% of those who weren't pregnant or had been on maternity leave over the two last years disagreed with the proposal to close the two centres

It is worth noting that the proposed closures were generally unsupported by consultees, however the proposed 'early years hubs' had a greater level of support as shown below.

Developing 'early years hubs' in the north and south of the borough for children with complex needs

- 58% agreed with the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs', whilst 20% disagreed with the proposal.
- The greatest support for the proposal to develop two 'early years hubs' is from respondents in the N1 postcode area (78%) and the lowest level of support from those in the N16 postcode area (48%).
- There is a high level of support to the proposal to develop two 'early years' hubs, with 80% of those that work in an early years setting agreeing with the proposal, followed by 75% of respondents that indicated that they work in a school
- A greater proportion of respondents across all age groups support the proposal to develop two early years hubs. There is a greater level of support by those aged 55 to 74, with 77% of respondents in this age cohort supporting the proposal.

Changing a number of children's centres into new 'children and family hubs' that bring together family support for children of ages 0 to 19 years.

- 44% of respondents agreed with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children's centres into multi agency "children & family" hubs, in contrast 39% disagreed with the proposal.
- A higher proportion of those aged 25 to 34 agreed with the proposal (47%), 49% of those aged 45 to 54 and 50% of those aged 55 to 64. Please note that the under 16 and 65+ age cohorts haven't been referenced due to the very small sample sizes.
- 36% of respondents felt that the 'children and family' hubs proposal negatively affects (negatively/ somewhat negatively), the way they currently access services. Similarly, 36% felt that the proposal affected them positively (positively/ somewhat positively). In contrast 28% chose the neutral response option.
- The most popular services that respondents would like to see in the proposed 'children and family' hub are: 'Stay and play and music activities', (10%), followed by parenting and family

support for children up to 5 years of age (9%) and “Early education and childcare with free places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old

The idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed ‘children and family hubs’ to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years

- Nearly half of respondents (48%) agree (strongly agree/ agree) with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed ‘children and family’ hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years.
- There’s broad agreement across the different age profiles with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed ‘children and family’ hubs to provide joined up support for children 0 - 19 years. 50% of those aged 16-24 agreed with the proposal whilst 23% disagreed. This is followed by 50% of those aged 25-34 agreeing with the proposal, whilst 28% disagreed.
- 71% of professionals working in a children’s centre agree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed ‘children and family’ hubs, whilst 8% disagree. Similarly, 75% of young people that responded agreed with the proposal, with 25% disagreeing (caveat - treat with caution due to small sample size).

As a result of the opposition to the proposed closures of the two centres, the Council has decided to delay any closures until a wider review of boroughwide provisions is carried out. This means the two centres will not close in September 2022.