



Childcare Development and Sustainability Service

You Said, We Did – Consultation Report

June 2021

Introduction

Between 15 March 2021 and 25 April 2021, Bristol City Council carried out a consultation on the draft commissioning strategy for the Childcare Development and Sustainability Service.

The Childcare Development and Sustainability Service (CDSS) supports families, children and young people by making sure they can access high quality, sustainable and affordable childcare. It does this by:

- Developing new childcare provision
- Making childcare provision more sustainable (or future-proof)
- Improving the quality of childcare provision
- Helping the council to fulfil its statutory childcare duties.

The intended audience for the consultation was childcare providers, who would be supported by the recommissioned CDSS, and parent/carers, who would be beneficiaries of sufficient, high-quality childcare across the city. It was promoted through local authority childcare distribution lists, press releases, the Local Offer website, and through the Bristol Parent Carer Forum.

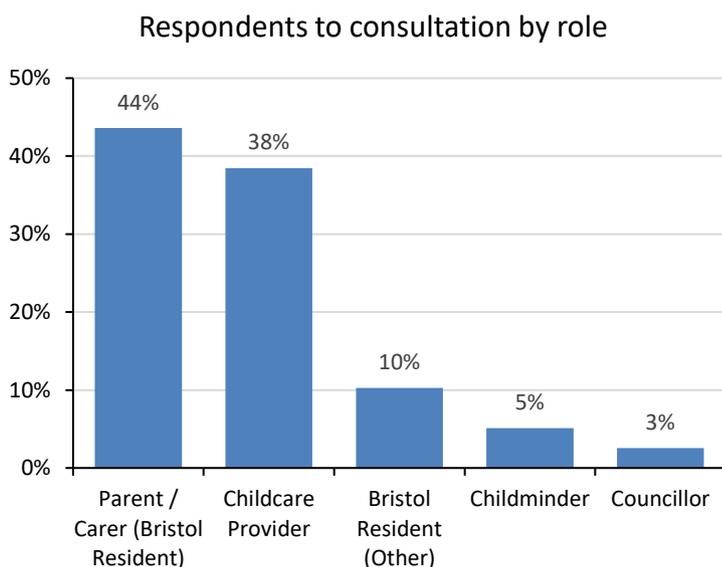
Feedback was sought across three main areas:

1. The proposed aims of the service
2. The commissioning priorities of the service
3. The procurement recommendations for the service

This document summarises the feedback received and Bristol City Council's response to the key issues raised during the consultation.

Who responded?

39 responses were received, with childcare providers and parent/carers as the main two categories of respondent, when asked 'what is your role?':



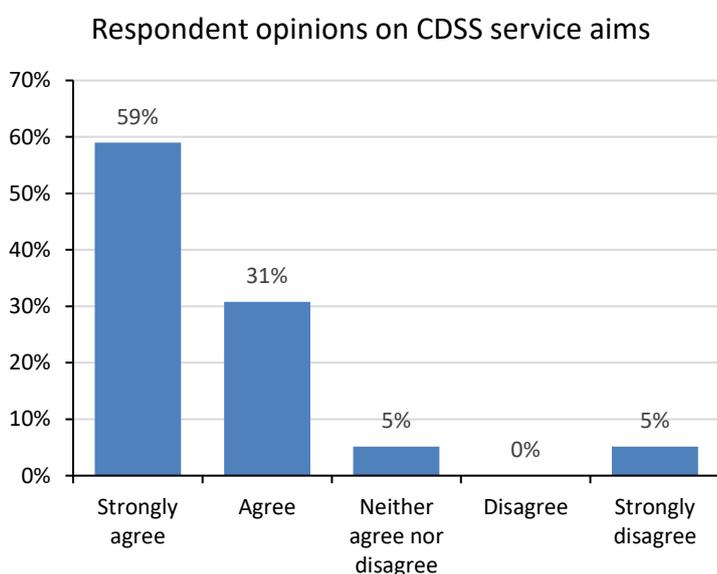
Q1. Service Aims

The consultation sought views on the following service aims set out in the draft commissioning strategy:

- Increase early years and childcare provision in areas where provision is not sufficient to meet parental needs
- Support new and existing providers in meeting all the legal and other obligations to provide childcare, such as Ofsted registration
- Improve the skillset of the early years, childcare and play workforce by providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses

- Engage childcare providers in professional networks and partnership working to ensure the provision for the local families they support is sufficient and consistent
- Ensure childcare providers have robust business plans in place so they can provide an affordable and sustainable service
- Ensure childcare providers increase their awareness of funding and fundraising opportunities and increase their ability to make the most of those opportunities
- Working with childcare providers and parents to ensure childcare places are available when and where parents need them, and to ensure enough children are attending to keep childcare providers financially secure and able to plan for the future
- Support providers to continuously improve the quality of childcare provision including provision for children from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, children living in areas of deprivation, and disabled children and young people

90% of respondents said they agreed (31%) or strongly agreed (59%) with the proposed service aims as set out in the draft commissioning strategy



Respondents were then asked if they had any comments on the proposed aims, or any additional aims they would wish to see included.

Of the respondents who strongly disagreed, only one of the two individuals gave further comment, expressing concern over the lack of support provided to childminders in Bristol over the past 20 years.

22 respondents gave an answer to this question. The main comments received in response are summarised in the below 'You Said, We Did' table:

You Said	We Did
<p>Funding levels to childcare providers are insufficient (5 out of 22 responses)</p> <p>Sample response: "If you want all these early years settings you need to value our work more, support us and sort out the low funding rate. I worked hard to gain my grade of Outstanding by Ofsted and I've considered packing it in after the way we have been treated."</p>	<p>Although funding rates are outside the scope of the Childcare Development and Sustainability Service, funding rates have a clear impact on provider sustainability and therefore on the local authority's ability to meet its statutory childcare duties.</p> <p>Funding rates are set by the Department for Education. The Early Years team will ensure that childcare provider voices on funding continue to be collected and reported to regional and national partners as part of CDSS monitoring, and used to support Bristol lobbying to the DfE on funding rates.</p>

	<p>The CDSS will also continue to ensure providers are supported to increase their awareness of funding and fundraising opportunities and increase their ability to make the most of those opportunities</p>
<p>Continuity of CDSS provided by BAND is important to childcare providers (3/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “We are strongly in support of BAND Ltd being able to continue the vital work they do for us and Bristol as a whole.”</p>	<p>Procurement regulations, and good practice on best use of public money, do not allow Bristol City Council to offer preferential treatment to any particular provider.</p> <p>However, all providers who may be able to and interested in providing this service will be encouraged to do so through an open tender process.</p>
<p>Affordability of childcare provision is a challenge for parents/carers (3/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “I feel there needs to be more financial support for parents to be able to comfortably afford to send their children to a setting where they can receive positive and nurturing care to meet their social and educational needs”</p>	<p>The CDSS will require the service provider to work with childcare settings, ensuring they have plans in place to regularly monitor the affordability of provision.</p> <p>This is also based on One City Plan objectives, and will be informed by Childcare Sufficiency Assessment data on affordability by ward.</p> <p>Work is also ongoing to increase awareness among parents/carers of free provision for eligible 2 year olds, and 3 and 4 year olds</p>
<p>Children should have access to nutritious, healthy food (3/22)</p>	<p>Access to nutritious food for children is another key One City Plan objective, and the service will look to support settings in providing this as a statutory requirement of the Early Years Foundation Stage</p>
<p>Children should have access to green spaces (2/22)</p>	<p>Staff CPD as part of this service will be reviewed to see if there are opportunities to promote the importance of access to green spaces, as well as other environmental aspects of high quality provision such as recycling and transport to settings.</p>
<p>Sufficiency of places should also look at type of places (eg places with sufficient parking, places for parents working shift work) – (2/22)</p>	<p>This is a key performance indicator of the current service – that providers should increase provision to meet parental need (including in provision type and access, as well as number of places) - and will continue to be promoted and monitored through the recommissioned service</p>
<p>Providers should address inequality of childcare uptake (1/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “Encourage providers to address equality issues and to take positive action to improve take up of opportunities for marginalised families</p>	<p>This is a key performance indicator of the current service, and will continue to be promoted and monitored through the recommissioned service</p>

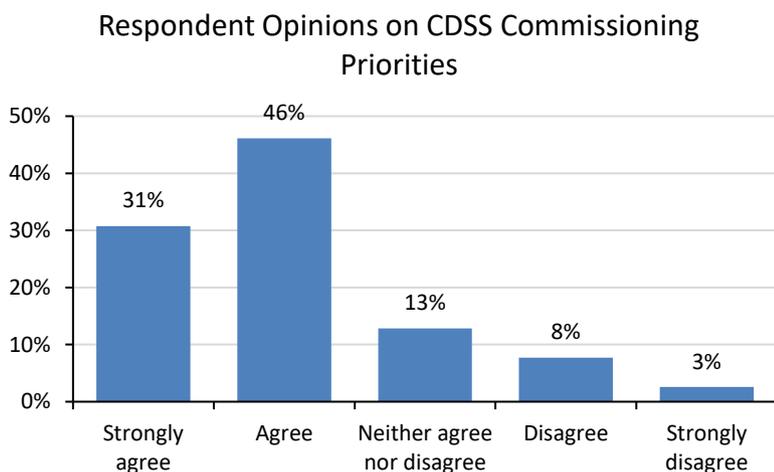
such as those newly arrived in the UK, those with language barriers, those is poverty, those with disabled family member, BAME families etc”	
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Q2. Commissioning Priorities

The consultation sought views on the following commissioning priorities set out in the draft commissioning strategy:

- Support the continued provision of high-quality and safe childcare
- Develop a service that is more focused on addressing the challenges of COVID-19 for childcare providers
- Support the One City Plan objectives of increasing the affordability of childcare for working parents and carers
- Continued focus on safeguarding and the One City priorities of developing a workforce which is aware of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), by providing training for childcare providers and by supporting childcare providers to improve the quality of their service
- Although the annual budget for this service will remain at current levels, the service will be expected to look for any cost savings and efficiencies they can make, in light of the likely ongoing financial pressure local authorities will face in response to COVID-19

77% of respondents said they agreed (46%) or strongly agreed (31%) with the proposed service aims as set out in the draft commissioning strategy.



Where respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, this related to the priority on cost savings and efficiencies, highlighting a lack of inflationary increase in the contract value already amounted to a cost saving which could impact on service delivery.

17 respondents provided further comments to this question. The main comments received in response are summarised in the below ‘You Said, We Did’ table:

You Said	We Did
<p>The council should not be looking for spending reductions, efficiencies or cuts, including through no inflationary uplift on contract value (5/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “We cannot expect providers to be expected to make quantified savings, particularly as</p>	<p>The local authority will test provider’s resilience to no inflationary uplifts as part of the tender exercise.</p>

<p>additional costs of Covid service delivery will apply to them too and the recommendations below already expect them to manage inflation within the existing envelope, which is effectively a cut”</p>	<p>In addition, the impact on service delivery of no inflationary uplifts will be reviewed as part of the monitoring of the recommissioned CDSS contract</p> <p>Any future decisions on long-term budgetary allocations will have in mind the impact on service delivery.</p>
<p>Funding levels to childcare providers should be a commissioning priority (4 out of 17 responses)</p> <p>Sample response: “As well as focussing on making childcare affordable we also need to look at the barriers to providing quality care and education when the rate of payment for the early years entitlement has stayed the same for a number of years. It is increasingly difficult to upskill our workforce and practice with the budget that we have.”</p>	<p>Although funding rates are outside the scope of the Childcare Development and Sustainability Service, funding rates have a clear impact on provider sustainability and therefore on the local authority’s ability to meet its statutory childcare duties.</p> <p>Funding rates are set by the Department for Education. The Early Years team will ensure that childcare provider voices on funding continue to be collected and reported to regional and national partners as part of CDSS monitoring, and used to support Bristol lobbying to the DfE on funding rates.</p> <p>The CDSS will also continue to ensure providers are supported to increase their awareness of funding and fundraising opportunities and increase their ability to make the most of those opportunities</p>
<p>Continuity of CDSS provided by BAND is important to childcare providers (3/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “We are strongly in support of BAND Ltd being able to continue the vital work they do for us and Bristol as a whole.”</p>	<p>Procurement regulations, and good practice on best use of public money, do not allow Bristol City Council to offer preferential treatment to any particular provider.</p> <p>However, all providers who may be able to and interested in providing this service will be encouraged to do so through an open tender process.</p>
<p>Support for focus on ACEs/safeguarding in commissioning priorities (2/22)</p> <p>Sample response: “Continued focus on safeguarding and the One City priorities of developing a workforce which is aware of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), by providing training for childcare providers and by supporting childcare providers to improve the quality of their service.”</p>	<p>This will be a key part of staff CPD and provider quality improvement delivered through the recommissioned service.</p>
<p>Commissioning priorities should also highlight One City Plan objectives to reduce inequalities and promote early help for families (2/22)</p>	<p>This is a key priority for the service, and the commissioning strategy will be updated to reflect this in its commissioning priorities</p>

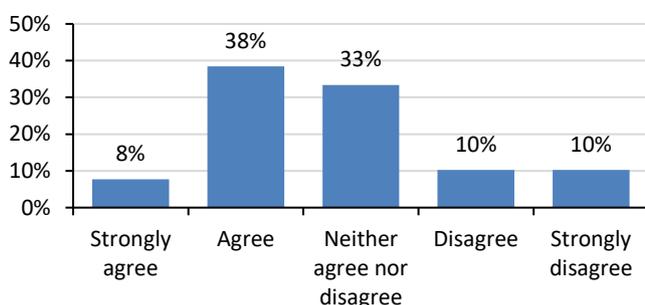
Q4. Procurement Recommendations

The consultation sought views on the following procurement recommendations set out in the draft commissioning strategy:

- The contract would be delivered at its current value of £305,000 per year for one year, with the potential for a further one-year extension.
- The value of the CDSS contract would not rise with inflation for the duration of the contract. Providers that apply (or bid) to deliver the CDSS would be expected to factor in any increased costs of inflation into their proposals. The service would be reviewed annually throughout the life of the contract and any changes to the financial position of the service provider would be considered as part of this review.

46% of respondents said they agreed (38%) or strongly agreed (8%) with the proposed service aims as set out in the draft commissioning strategy.

Respondent Opinions on CDSS Procurement Recommendations



13 respondents provided further comments to this question. The main comments received in response are summarised in the below ‘You Said, We Did’ table:

You Said	We Did
<p>A one year initial contract length is too short (4/17):</p> <p>Sample response: “I have concerns about running a strategic development on a year to year basis. One year is not a long enough period where the contractor has to spend substantial resources bidding for next year's funding.”</p>	<p>Whilst the initial contract length is one year, there is scope for a further one year extension.</p> <p>In addition, the current contract will now be extended for an additional year, to 31 December 2022, to allow the current provider to focus resources on COVID-19 response. The exact contract specification, including duration, will be reviewed ahead of the open tender process in 2022.</p>
<p>Keeping the contract value at its current rate may impact on the service that can be delivered (3/17).</p> <p>Sample response: “How can it be delivered at the same amount when costs have gone up with inflation? Surely this should be reflected.”</p>	<p>The local authority will test provider’s resilience to no inflationary uplifts as part of the tender exercise.</p> <p>In addition, the impact on service delivery of no inflationary uplifts will be reviewed as part of the monitoring of the recommissioned CDSS contract</p>

Q4. Equalities information

What is your age?	18-24:	0%
	25-34:	26%
	35-44:	41%
	45-54:	10%
	55-64:	13%
	65-74:	8%
	75+:	0%

	Prefer not to say: 3%
Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?	Yes: 5% No: 92% Prefer not to say: 3%
What is your sex?	Female: 90% Male: 5% Prefer not to say: 5% Other: 0%
Have you gone through any part of a gender reassignment process or do you intend to?	Yes: 0% No: 90% Prefer not to say: 10%
What is your ethnic group?	White British: 75% White Irish: 5% White Other: 8% Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British: 3% Asian/ Asian British: 5% Mixed/ Multi-ethnic group: 0% Gypsy/ Roma/ Irish Traveller: 0% Prefer not to say: 3% Other: 3%
What is your sexual orientation?	Bisexual: 3% Gay Man: 0% Gay Woman/ Lesbian: 3% Heterosexual/ Straight: 87% Prefer not to say: 8% Other: 0%
What is your religion/ faith?	No religion: 59% Buddhist: 0% Christian: 33% Hindu: 0% Jewish: 0% Muslim: 0% Pagan: 5% Sikh: 0% Prefer not to say: 0% Other: 3%
Are you pregnant or have you given birth in the last 26 weeks?	Yes: 8% No: 87% Prefer not to say: 2%
Are you a refugee or asylum seeker?	Yes: 0% No: 97% Prefer not to say: 3%

