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## PRESS RELEASE

### HEALTHWATCH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PUBLISHES REPORT ON THE VIEWS OF FAMILIES USING CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND LIBRARY PLUS SERVICES

Healthwatch Northamptonshire, the consumer champion for health and social care, visited 14 children's centres and 17 Library Plus services during May, June and July 2015 to hear from families, staff and volunteers about the services provided for children aged 0-5 years.

Healthwatch Northamptonshire decided to carry out this piece of work following a number of changes to services, including the change in venue of Daventry East children's centre in December 2014 and the further reduction of hours and change in venues of 5 other children's centres across Northamptonshire, which were:

- Highfield, Wellingborough
- Manor, Raunds
- Nene Lakes, Earls Barton
- Brixworth
- Roade

The key findings in the report are:

- although libraries are welcoming to families, they do not have the space, facilities, staff, volunteers or expertise to run universal<sup>1</sup> sessions for under 5s
- staffing levels are low across all the libraries Healthwatch visited, given the additional functions for libraries

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<sup>1</sup> Open access to all families regardless of need

- volunteers to run the children's sessions are difficult to recruit
- families that may need help do not appear to be going to either libraries or children's centres

Helen Statham, Chair of Healthwatch Northamptonshire's Children, Young People and Families working group said "Based on the work we did talking to parents/carers, staff and volunteers at children's centres and libraries, we concluded that the narrowing focus of children's centres; the reduction of children's centre sessions open to all families, combined with the shift of some services from children's centres to libraries has had a negative impact. We found that the working relationships between library services and children's centres to deliver services for under 5s is improving, however there are still issues to address such as families who need extra support are not being referred to children's centres from libraries. We have recommended an independent evaluation of the service to ensure that all families that need help are being identified as early as possible and know where to go. We are keen to work with Northamptonshire County Council to further explore the views and experiences of parents and carers, as well as staff and volunteers, to ensure that families are able to easily access help and support at the right time and the right place for them."

**For the full report please go to:**

[http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/sites/default/files/cc\\_rep\\_fina\\_l29092015.pdf](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/sites/default/files/cc_rep_fina_l29092015.pdf)

**Ends**

**Notes to the editor:**

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