Consultation on proposed changes to Children’s Centres

Consultation Report
15th March 2019
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1. Introduction
1.1 Legislative Context
Legislation in relation to Children’s Centre is contained in The Childcare Act 2006, and underpinned by Sure Start Children’s Centres Statutory Guidance, which was updated in 2013:


A Sure Start children’s centre is defined in the Act as a place or a group of places:

- which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority’s area are made available in an integrated way;
- through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and,
- at which activities for young children are provided.

The Statutory Guidance states that 'children’s centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as about providing premises in particular geographical areas.

A children’s centre should make available universal and targeted early childhood services either by providing the services at the centre itself or by providing advice and assistance to parents (mothers and fathers) and prospective parents in accessing services provided elsewhere.'

The guidance defines the core purpose as being to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and,
- child and family health and life chances.

1.2 Lambeth Provision
Lambeth fulfils its duties under the Childcare Act and in line with the Statutory Guidance through its network of 23 Sure Start Children’s Centres, the majority of which are delivered directly by Lambeth schools under a service level agreement, with the exception of Coin Street children’s centre, which is delivered by a community enterprise. Most of these schools hold the service level agreement for delivery of a single children’s centre, but a small number (six) are responsible for the delivery of two or three centres.

Lambeth children’s centres deliver the core purpose through the provision of a range of activities including:

- Stay and play provision;
- Adult and Family Learning Classes;
- Health Services;
- 1-2-1 family support;
- Parenting courses and support; and,
- Support to families in crisis through advice appointments.

Some children’s centres deliver childcare, including the free early learning offer for children aged two, three and four.
1.3 Drivers for Change
Proposed changes to Children’s Centres in Lambeth are primarily driven by a very significant financial imperative, with a current deficit of £1.398m per annum in the council’s children’s centre budget as a result of changes to grant funding conditions made by central government to the early years’ element (3 and 4 year old funding) of the dedicated schools grant in 2017/18.

These changes included the introduction of a cap on the proportion of the grant that councils can centrally retain rather than use to fund direct delivery of free early learning for three and four year olds. In Lambeth, a high proportion of the funding that was centrally retained prior to this change was used to support children’s centre delivery.

The cap was introduced incrementally from 2017/18 to 2018/19, with an upper retention limit of 7% of the grant in 2017/18; and 5% in 2018/19 resulting in a deficit of £1.398m in 2018/19 and in each year going forward. The council has used core funding to manage this deficit in 2017/18 and 2018/19 while proposals around the remodelling of children’s centre provision have been developed, but cannot continue to do so on a year on year basis, meaning an alternative delivery model is required.

Proposals have been developed in response to this financial imperative, but in this context aim to maintain a strong children’s centre and early years’ offer, with increased integration of health, early help and early learning services and simplified management structures to provide a consistently high quality service that supports positive outcomes for children and families across the borough.

2. Our proposals
2.1 Key principles and model
The proposals that we consulted on were underpinned by the council’s commitment to three key principles or objectives which we defined as follows:

- Staying local – keeping centres accessible and open for the most number of families possible;
- Protecting the vulnerable – ensuring that we continue to provide services that support the families who are in greatest need; and,
- Long-term value for money – ensuring services are efficiently run and fit for the future.

As part of the consultation, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that our proposals met these objectives.

We consulted on proposals to:

- Reconfigure the delivery of our children’s centres into five cluster areas, with one lead provider responsible for the delivery of children’s centre services in each area and two lead providers in the Brixton area.

  The five cluster areas we proposed were:
  - North Lambeth;
  - Clapham / Clapham Park;
  - Streatham;
  - Norwood; and,
  - Brixton / Tulse Hill and Brixton / Stockwell.

- Retain eleven of our current children’s centres as ‘core centres’ with a full service delivery offer morning and afternoon.
The centres we proposed to retain as core centres were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Henry Fawcett</th>
<th>Ethelred</th>
<th>St Stephen’s</th>
<th>Clapham Manor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maytree</td>
<td>Hitherfield</td>
<td>Kingswood</td>
<td>Jubilee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loughborough</td>
<td>Stockwell</td>
<td>Liz Atkinson</td>
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</tbody>
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- Retain a further seven of our current children’s centres as ‘link’ centres with a reduced service offer, with services delivered on a sessional (morning or afternoon) basis.

The centres we proposed to become link centres were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treehouse</th>
<th>Streatham Hub</th>
<th>Woodmansterne</th>
<th>Crown Lane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessop</td>
<td>Effra</td>
<td>Rosendale</td>
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- Withdraw funding from five of our current children’s centres and no longer use those buildings for the direct delivery of children’s centre services.

The centres were we proposed to withdraw funding were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin Street</th>
<th>Heathbrook</th>
<th>Lark Hall</th>
<th>Weir Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunnyhill</td>
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As part of the consultation, we asked respondents to confirm the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with our proposals for each individual centre, and provided space for further comments to be made on an individual centre basis.

2.2 Factors Considered

We considered a number of different factors in developing our proposals about which centres we would propose to be core centres; which link centres; and from which we would propose to withdraw funding.

These factors included:

- Data about where in the borough young children aged 0-4 and their families live, and particularly where the most disadvantaged children and families live.
- Data about how young children and their families currently use children’s centres, and where families typically travel from to use different centres.
- The distance between our children’s centres, and how we could make sure that families continue to be able to use some services within a reasonable walking distance of their home.
- The size and suitability of our buildings. Children’s Centre buildings vary considerably in size, and our bigger buildings are better able than the smaller ones to offer a full range of services, and particularly health services. We felt these centres were better suited to be core centres under our new model.
- The significant capital investment that the Lambeth Early Action Partnership programme has brought to Jubilee, Liz Atkinson, St Stephen’s and Loughborough Children’s Centres, and the new buildings which have just opened or are about to open at Ethelred and Maytree Nursery Schools and Children’s Centres.
- Other ways in which buildings we no longer funded as children’s centres could be used so that we could keep as many services for young children and their families as we can, even if these are not children’s centre services.
We also asked people for their views on the services that we should prioritise for delivery in a link centre, encouraging respondents to select three main priorities and allowing space for additional comments; and asked for views on our proposed services offer for young children and families.

2.3 Alternative Options
We outlined three alternative options that we had considered in response to the deficit in the available budget, and explained why we had rejected these three options.

These alternative options were to:

1. Make no changes. We explained that we could not do this because of the deficit in the budget.
2. Make no change to the current model but to reduce the budget on an individual centre basis. We felt that this would not be viable and that individual centres would not be able to function with the level of funding reduction that would be required.
3. Close more centres. This would consolidate delivery in a number of core centres rather than having additional link sites, but to achieve this we felt we would have to further reduce the number of individual centres from which we delivered services. We rejected this option because we wanted to keep as many centres open and accessible to families as possible.

3. The consultation
3.1 Consultation objectives
We consulted on our proposals to gather the views of children’s centre staff and providers; of children’s centre users; of local partners and stakeholders; and of Lambeth’s residents. This is in line with the Sure Start Children’s Centre Statutory Guidance, which places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to consult prior to:

- opening a new children’s centre;
- making a significant change to the range and nature of services provided through a children’s centre and / or how they are delivered, including significant changes to services provided through linked sites; and,
- closing a children’s centre; or reducing the services provided to such an extent that it no longer meets the statutory definition of a Sure Start children’s centre.

The guidance also requires that Local Authorities give particular attention to how ensuring disadvantaged families and minority groups participate in the consultation process.

In carrying out this consultation exercise, our primary objectives were to:

- Ensure that all interested parties were aware of our proposals and the reasons why we were proposing to make changes.
- Ensure that all parties had a range of opportunities to comment on and respond to our proposals, both by responding to our survey and by meeting with us to discuss proposals and to express their views on these.
- To help us to understand whether the proposals we have developed in response to the deficit in our children’s centre budget are the best of the options available to us, and to gather views on ways in which we can make the proposed new model as effective as we can in meeting the needs of young children and their families.
3.2 **Who we consulted**
We consulted with children’s centres users and former users; local stakeholders; children’s centre providers and staff; and local partners.

3.3 **How we consulted**
Proposals were outlined online and through a consultation booklet which was widely distributed across children’s centres, libraries and health centres.

Posters were displayed alerting residents to proposed changes and inviting them to have their say through the consultation process.

Letters were sent to all Lambeth resident adult users of children’s centres in the period Nov 2017-Nov 2018. These letters advised residents of the proposed changes and the consultation process and invited them to participate.

Residents and stakeholders were asked to respond via a survey which was available online and in hard copy through children’s centres, libraries and health centres. Children’s centre staff were available to support children’s centre users to respond via the survey, and built this into activities such as stay and play sessions and coffee mornings. ESOL tutors were also encouraged to support parents learning English to participate.

In addition, meetings were held in Lambeth’s 23 children’s centres over the period 7th January – 8th February 2019. All meetings were held within the school day, and all children’s centres received additional funding to support crèche and refreshment costs. It was not possible to provide a crèche in all centres due to pre-existing activities and demands on space, but crèches were provided where possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Children's Centre</th>
<th>Date of Meeting</th>
<th>Time of meeting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Manor</td>
<td>Wednesday 6th Feb</td>
<td>11.30 - 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coin Street</td>
<td>Friday 25th Jan</td>
<td>1.00-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Lane</td>
<td>Thursday 24th Jan</td>
<td>1.30-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effra and Jubilee at Jubilee</td>
<td>Tuesday 5th Feb</td>
<td>1.15-2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethelred</td>
<td>Wednesday 23rd Jan</td>
<td>1.30-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathbook</td>
<td>Tuesday 29th Jan</td>
<td>9.00-11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Fawcett</td>
<td>Wednesday 9th Jan</td>
<td>2.00-3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitherfield</td>
<td>Thursday 31st Jan</td>
<td>9.30-11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessop</td>
<td>Wednesday 6th Feb</td>
<td>9.30-11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingswood</td>
<td>Tuesday 5th Feb</td>
<td>9.30-11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lark Hall</td>
<td>Friday 18th Jan</td>
<td>12.00-2.00</td>
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<td>Liz Atkinson</td>
<td>Wednesday 16th Jan</td>
<td>10.00-11.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loughborough</td>
<td>Friday 1st Feb</td>
<td>9.00-11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maytree</td>
<td>Friday 8th Feb</td>
<td>1.30-3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosendale</td>
<td>Monday 14th Jan</td>
<td>11.00-1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Stephen’s</td>
<td>Thursday 7th Feb</td>
<td>9.30-11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockwell</td>
<td>Wednesday 30th Jan</td>
<td>9.30-11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streatham Hub</td>
<td>Monday 28th Jan</td>
<td>12.00-2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunnyhill</td>
<td>Tuesday 22nd Jan</td>
<td>12.30-2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treehouse</td>
<td>Tuesday 29th Jan</td>
<td>2.30-4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weir Link</td>
<td>Wednesday 31st Jan</td>
<td>2.00-3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodmansterne</td>
<td>Monday 4th Feb</td>
<td>10.00-11.30</td>
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</table>
The meeting to discuss proposals for Jubilee and Effra children’s centres was a combined meeting as the building used for Effra children’s centre delivery (Brockwell one o’clock club) was closed for capital improvement works. Jubilee and Effra children’s centres are delivered under a combined management structure.

In addition, a separate meeting was held with young parents receiving support from St Michael’s Fellowship.

We undertook this broad range of consultation methods to ensure that we were able to fulfil our statutory duty to ensure that disadvantaged families and minority groups were able to participate in the consultation process.

3.4 When we consulted
Public consultation on proposals relating to the future provision of children’s centres in Lambeth ran from 3rd December 2018 - 10th February 2019.

4. Responses to the consultation
4.1 Number of responses
1,044 people responded to the survey. 663 of these completed the survey online, and 381 completed a paper copy.

It should be noted that on 14/01/19 UNISON published guidance to completion of the survey with the opening comment of:

“You can fill in the children’s centres consultation here. We think it is important that in all sections you answer “strongly disagree” to all click options”

255 people are recorded on our children’s centre data base as attending consultation meetings.

4.2 Summary of responses
4.2.1 Council’s commitment to staying local, protecting the vulnerable and achieving best value
The online / hard copy survey asked people how far they felt the proposals met the council’s commitment to:

- Staying local – keeping centres accessible and open for the most number of families possible;
- Protecting the vulnerable – ensuring that we continue to provide services that support the families who are in greatest need; and,
- Long-term value for money – ensuring services are efficiently run and fit for the future.

Responses were as follows:
The majority (56%) of respondents disagreed that proposals met these objectives, with 37% of these strongly disagreeing.

Approximately 30% of people agreed that proposals did meet these objectives, and 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.

483 people left a further comment in this section. A large number of these are calling for all centres to be kept open, 30% of those who commented stated how they valued the services in general and the support offered for famines and careers. 26% noted how much they valued having the services locally, while 12% cited the value of these services to vulnerable people. 10% of those who commented spoke about the benefits to their health and wellbeing and 7% praised the support given through activities, education and personal development.

4.2.2 Proposals by centre and cluster area
The online / hard copy survey then asked people for their views on proposals around the centres that we proposed to be core; on those that we proposed as link centres; and on those were we proposed to withdraw funding. Respondents did not need to comment on each individual centres, and most just commented on the centres that were important to them. The total number of respondents per individual centre, and the number of additional comments received, were as follows:
Survey data relating to the extent to which people agreed or disagreed with proposals in relation to individual centres is shown by proposed cluster for ease, and is followed by a summary of key points raised though comments made on those centres.

North Lambeth
Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Henry Fawcett – core children’s centre;
- St Stephen’s – core children’s centre;
- Ethelred – core children’s centre; and,
- Coin Street – withdrawal of funding.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.
Service users at Henry Fawcett, Ethelred and St Stephen’s responded positively to proposals to maintain the three centres as core centres, and spoke highly of the support they had received at whichever centre they used. The value of the centres in reducing inequality and supporting community cohesion was a key feature of discussions at all three centres.

The primary concern raised through comments submitted via the survey and within consultation meetings about proposals for the North Lambeth area was about proposed withdrawal of funding at Coin Street. Coin Street children’s centre users and local stakeholders expressed concern about the withdrawal of services for Lambeth families, and the challenges of travelling to the nearest centre (Ethelred) to access services which were already oversubscribed.

Of the 240 comments online around the withdrawal of funding for Coin Street half (52%) of these related to the need for local centres and accessibility and 49% praised the quality and variety of services offered. Around a quarter (27%) raised the impact closure would have on children and families while, 20% asked about other sources of funding. One in five (18%) asked us to keep all centres open.

In both the online consultation responses and in the consultation meeting held at Coin Street, current and previous children’s centre users spoke about the significant impact the centre had on their lives and those of their children in the early years and as they grew to adolescence. There were strong views expressed that the children’s centre represented the only community resource available to children and families in the immediate area, and that it was a focal point in creating local community networks.

The fact that there is significant development happening in the North of the borough was raised, with questions as to how the council was investing the funding that it received as a result. Specific questions about the use of CIL funding repeatedly arose in meetings with children’s centre users and with trustees.

Many respondents online and through the meeting felt that Coin Street or their local community was being unfairly targeted by the council under the proposals, and queried the relative proximity of Henry Fawcett
and Ethelred Children’s Centres. Concerns were also raised about proposals at Henry Fawcett, Ethelred and St Stephens. These concerns were typically the more generalised ones outlined above rather than in relation to those individual centres, which would all remain as core centres under these proposals. However, parents and children’s centre users responding did also express significant concern about the impact on families currently using Coin Street and the distance they would have to travel.

**Clapham / Clapham Park**

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Clapham Manor – core children’s centre;
- Heathbrook – withdrawal of funding;
- Maytree – core children’s centre;
- Treehouse – link children’s centre; and,
- Weir Link - withdrawal of funding.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.

This proposed cluster includes five current centres, Heathbrook, Clapham Manor, Maytree, Weir Link and Treehouse.

Respondents were positive about proposals to maintain Clapham Manor and Maytree as core centres, though concerned about the impact of wider changes in the borough.

High levels of concern were raised about proposed withdrawal of funding at Heathbrook. These concerns were heightened by proposals for withdrawal of funding at Lark Hall centres, and concern about future provision of children’s centre services at the Yvonne Carr Centre in Wandsworth. It is now proposed that Wandsworth will maintain the Yvonne Carr Centre as one of its Thrive Hubs with delivery of children’s centre services on an ongoing basis,
125 people commented on the online survey about the withdrawal of funding at Heathbrook. Almost half (45%) of these were around the need for local centres and accessibility, 30% asked to keep all centres open, 23% raised concerns on the impact on children and families while one in five (20%) raised questions about alternative funding. 18% praised the quality and variety of services.

It was widely recognised by children’s centre users attending the consultation meeting that services had already significantly reduced at Heathbrook as a result of savings made in 2017/18.

Most of those families using Heathbrook Children’s Centre were also accessing services at Clapham Manor, although many expressed concern about capacity.

Some of the parents attending the meeting at Heathbrook shared information about their own experiences and journey to parenthood, and the very high levels of support that they had needed as a result, and the pivotal role the children’s centre had played in this. They were very concerned about loss of provision going forwards and for other parents.

Although a high number of respondents to the online survey indicated that they strongly disagreed with proposals around the Weir Link, this was not reflected in the consultation meeting, which just one parent attended.

132 people commented on the withdrawal of funding from the Weir Link centre, as with the others 44% asked for all centres to be kept open, 15% highlighted the need for local services while 14% mentioned the centre providing a good service and vital for the community in a deprived area.

As in all clusters, more generalised concern was repeatedly expressed in relation to the thematic areas outlined below. This was particularly apparent at Treehouse, which is proposed to become a link site with a sessional service offer.

Children’s centre users and former users at Clapham Manor were particularly interested in the council developing fundraising mechanisms that could allow them to contribute to the range of services available at that centre.

**Streatham Cluster**

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Hitherfield – core children’s centre;
- Streatham Hub – link children’s centre;
- Sunnyhill – withdrawal of funding; and,
- Woodmansterne – link children’s centre.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.
This proposed cluster includes four current centres, Hitherfield, Sunnyhill, Streatham Hub and Woodmansterne.

A general concern was raised in a number of consultation meetings and by a consultation response submitted by Labour Councillors in the Streatham area that Streatham was underserved in the proposals in comparison to the North of the borough.

The majority of the specific concerns that were raised related to proposed withdrawal of funding at Sunnyhill. It was repeatedly stated that Sunnyhill was the best and most popular children’s centre in the area, with a building which was welcoming and fit for purpose. The programme of activities was also highly valued by families.

140 people commented on the withdrawal of funding to Sunnyhill on the online survey, over half (54%) were calling for all centres to be kept open while a quarter (26%) praised the centre for its services and contribution a deprived community.

Some more critical comments were received in relation to provision at Hitherfield and Streatham Hub, although criticism of provision at Hitherfield was largely in comparison to Sunnyhill rather than of the centre in itself.

Many respondents expressed surprise at proposals to maintain Streatham Hub instead of Sunnyhill, and questioned why the council would continue to pay rent to deliver services in a building which was not purpose built and were there were ongoing difficulties with heating. A number of those participating in focus groups at both Hitherfield and Sunnyhill also referenced difficulties in accessing services at Streatham Hub, with what they perceived to be arbitrary rules about who could and could not attend based on their postcode.

However, centre users at Streatham Hub spoke very positively about the services and support they has accessed through the centre and the difference this has made to themselves and their children. The accessible location of the centre was widely recognised.
**Norwood cluster**
Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Kingswood – core children’s centre;
- Crown Lane – link children’s centre; and,
- Rosendale – link children’s centre.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.

This proposed cluster includes three current centres, Rosendale, Kingswood and Crown Lane.

General concerns were raised about proposals to reduce delivery at Rosendale and Crown Lane, with concerns about travel distance to other centres in the borough. Users at Crown Lane in particular spoke about the complex challenges they were already facing and the importance of the centre being open throughout the school day.

**Brixton / Tulse Hill**
Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Effra – link children’s centre;
- Jubilee – core children’s centre; and,
- Loughborough – core children’s centre.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.
This proposed cluster includes three current centres, Loughborough, Jubilee and Effra. Effra children’s centre services have been delivered from Brockwell One O’clock club for a number of years.

There was a high level of support for maintaining Jubilee and Loughborough as core centres, with using talking about the impact the centres had on themselves and their children.

The greatest concern at both Loughborough and Jubilee was in relation to possible changes to staff with whom families had established and trusting relationships. As centres were proposed to remain as core there were fewer concerns about future service delivery than at centres were greater change is proposed, although the general thematic concerns outlined above were again represented through online responses and in consultation meetings.

There was a much greater level of concern raised about Effra becoming a link centre, with a strong level of response saying it should remain as a core centre.

**Brixton / Stockwell cluster**

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagreed with proposals on an individual centre basis as follows:

- Jessop – link children’s centre;
- Lark Hall – withdrawal of funding;
- Liz Atkinson – core children’s centre; and,
- Stockwell – core children’s centre.

Opportunity was then given for any further comments to be made in relation to these individual centres.
This proposed cluster includes four current centres, Stockwell, Jessop, Lark Hall and Liz Atkinson.

Support for proposals to maintain Liz Atkinson and Stockwell as core centres was strong, and service users at Jessop understood that to maintain the highly valued nursery offer for two year olds at the centre, children’s centre services would continue to be delivered on an afternoon only basis as currently. More general concerns raised by users of these three centres are captured within the thematic areas of concern outlined above.

Additional concerns were raised in relation to Lark Hall children’s centre and the proposed withdrawal of services. Some families expressed concern about travelling to centres elsewhere and valued having a local and smaller children’s centre were they felt known and welcomed. Concern around Lark Hall was heightened by the current lack of provision at Lark Hall one o’clock club, and by proposals for changes to children’s centre provision at Heathbrook and in neighbouring Wandsworth.

120 people commented on the online survey around the withdrawal of funding from Lark Hall. 41% called for all centres to be kept open, while 12% highlighted the need for local services. Another 12% of comments were praising the service as a way for people to have contact with professionals or to go on courses.

4.2.3 Key themes emerging from online survey and consultation meetings

In addition to the comments and issues raised in relation to proposals on a geographical basis, there were other recurrent themes which arose through the free text responses made to proposals for each individual centre, and through the consultation meetings held across the borough. These recurrent themes or areas of concern in relation to proposals were as follows:

a. Early intervention and prevention
A recurrent theme in all meetings and within responses to the online consultation was the value of the type of early intervention and prevention services offered by children’s centres, and the impact and cost of reducing these services to more specialist services at a later stage in a child’s life.

The council was challenged on how the children’s centre proposals aligned with wider MTFS proposals which protected funding for more specialist services to support children and young people’s mental health.

b. **Challenge around level of savings to be achieved and use of Council Reserves**

The Children’s Centre consultation on savings of £1.4m to be made to the budget as a result of changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant terms and conditions coincided with the Council’s consultation on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The latter contained information about savings of £500k to be made to the general fund spend on children’s centres, and this led to a number of questions about the level of savings required.

The £500k savings consulted on as part of the MTFS are to be achieved by not extending early years commissioning contracts which are due to expire on 31st March 2019, and are outside of the children’s centre proposals which are to achieve savings of £1.4m due to a deficit in the budget.

Through both online responses and through consultation meetings it was clear that there was a high level of confusion about the two funding streams. This meant that some respondents understood that the total savings to be achieved through the children’s centre proposals were £500k, and led to suggestions that this could be met through use of the council’s reserves.

c. **Level of savings already made to children’s centre provision**

The levels by which children’s centre provision had already been reduced to achieve savings of £967k in 2017/18 was raised repeatedly in online responses as well as within consultation meetings. Parents with more than one child spoke about the significant reduction in the services and support available to their younger children in comparison to older siblings. This was noted in particular with regard to stay and play activities, with many parents commenting on how the children’s centre offer over the last two years has seemed increasingly adult focused. Services available to adults such as adult learning courses are commissioned through separate funding streams and as such have been outside the savings made to children’s centre budgets.

d. **Value and impact of universal children’s centre provision**

The very high majority of those attending the consultation meetings, and the majority of those responding online, valued children’s centre provision highly and spoke about the very significant difference services had made to their lives and their children’s lives in the very early years.

In addition to valuing particular services such as stay and play groups, parenting courses, ESOL classes and support for breastfeeding, parents spoke repeatedly about the value of the service in reducing their isolation and anxiety as a new parent and creating opportunities for them to meet other parents and establish mutually supportive networks in their local community. The diversity of families attending children’s centres was recognised as a significant strength in many of the consultation meetings, with many parents recognising the value of this to their children as the next generation of adults.

The importance of being able to access support with debt, benefit and housing difficulties quickly and easily through children’s centres was also raised by many parents, with positive feedback about the support provided through advice appointments with Citizen’s Advice Bureau and by the Better Start workers. The Alexandra Rose voucher scheme, whereby low income families are provided with vouchers to exchange for fruit and vegetables at Lambeth’s market stalls, as well as the support to access food banks, was identified by many as a service that had been very beneficial to their family.
e. Capacity and demand
Concerns about the capacity of children’s centres to meet the needs of local children and families both currently and under the new proposed model were raised consistently.

In both online responses and in consultation meetings, families spoke about the challenges of arriving at a children’s centre session to find that it was full, and the impact that this had for themselves and their child.

There was significant concern about how further savings would limit this capacity further, with questions repeatedly raised about how the council would manage the demand and need for services if proposals were implemented.

This concern was expressed in every consultation meeting, by parents whose nearest centre would be subject to minimal change under proposals as well as by those whose nearest centre would have funding withdrawn.

In both online responses and in consultation meetings, parents of centres where the impact of proposals might be less were very conscious of the impact on families elsewhere in the borough, and of how they might struggle to access services which are already at capacity.

Within the consultation meetings, these concerns led to a lot of further discussion about how demand for services could be managed. A small number of those attending consultation meetings suggested that families who lived outside the borough should not be allowed to use services, but most participants recognised that centres played an important role in building communities and did not feel that local, non-Lambeth residents should be turned away from activities. Some centres currently operate booking systems from some sessions or activities, but most parents did not feel this was something which should become routine for stay and play activities.

f. Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities
A significant number of parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities attended the consultation meetings. These parents as a group were particularly anxious about proposed changes, with many becoming very tearful in meetings.

Concerns expressed were often generalised as concerns about any change to current provision and the impact this might have on themselves and their children when they were already facing so many challenges. More specific concerns related to the difficulty in getting to children’s centres with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), either because of particular challenges and behavioural issues linked to ASD, or because of difficulties with travel. Many of these parents spoke about children’s centres representing a non-judgemental, safe space for them to go with their children.

g. Support for young parents
A separate consultation meeting was held with young parents attending a long established and weekly support group held at Jubilee children’s centre and led by St Michael’s Fellowship under a commissioning arrangement with the council. These parents expressed significant concern about a proposed reduction in children’s centre provision, explaining that they viewed children's centres as a means of ensuring that their young children had a different and better start in life than they had experienced themselves. The contract held with St Michael's Fellowship for the delivery of targeted support for young parents is not within the scope of these proposals and has been extended for a further year to March 2020 pending a new commissioning round.

h. Consistent strength of staff and importance of relationships
In each consultation meeting and in online responses about individual centres, parents spoke very highly of children’s centre staff and of the welcome and support they received from those staff. The role of the Better Start (family support) Workers was recognised as very important for more vulnerable parents, with support offered around child development, finance, debt and housing difficulties, and parenting support. There was some concern expressed by parents about a new staffing model which may lead to staff changes in their local centre and a need to engage with different members of staff. The level of concern expressed was at its highest in more deprived areas of the borough. Some parents recognised the value of the support they had been offered by a particular member of staff or staff team, but also noted that this was reflected across all children’s centres with staff working very consistently.

i. Income generation and use of CIL funding
Discussion about charging for services was limited and was not proposed by officers as a possible solution but did arise in a very small number of centres, usually in more affluent parts of the borough. Suggestions made related to voluntary contributions on a termly basis rather than a charge per session, as there seemed to be a wide spread consensus that this would create further divide between families.

In a number of consultation meetings and particularly in the North of the borough, the possibility of drawing in CIL funding to support additional children’s centre activity was proposed, as was the possibility of seeking further investment from local businesses.

Many parents expressed a desire to help and support children’s centres, and asked how they could do so. Suggestions put forward primarily related to parent led fund raising activities (similar to school PTA activity).

4.2.4 Key priorities for a link centre
After asking for views on proposals by individual centre, the online survey then asked respondents to indicate the three service areas which they felt were most important for delivery at a link centre. This was also discussed within the consultation meetings.

Responses from the online survey were as follows:
Stay and play groups for young children and their parents and carers were the service that the majority (90%) of online respondents felt should be prioritised. This was also reflected in discussion at the consultation meetings, where participants spoke about the importance of this type of activity in supporting their children’s development and in providing opportunity for parents to meet and socialise with others.

59% of online respondents also felt that child health services should be prioritised at link centres, and many commented on the value of these services being available within children’s centres. Other services which proportionately high number of online respondents felt should be prioritised included adult and family learning courses including ESOL classes; support from Better Start workers; and support with parenting.

When the service offer for a link centre was discussed within the consultation meetings, participants were keen to ensure that the offer was tailored to local need but that a range of services was maintained in each link centre.

4.2.5 Analysis of data about other options proposed
For option 1 ‘No change to the current model’ 379 people commented on this option. The majority (66%) of respondents either say that they don’t want to see any change, or that they don’t want any centres to close. This compares to 12% who understood that this option was not feasible, 7% questioned whether we could find the money from other sources such as the private sector while 5% called for the services to be expanded.

For option 2 ‘Keep 23 centres open with a reduced service’ 295 people commented on this option. The majority (61%) disagreed with this option. 22% of the comments said they agreed, or they would agree if Option 1 was not viable. 5% said they needed more information and 3% requested support for individual centres.

Option 3 ‘Close more centres’, 326 people commented on this option. It was the least popular option with the vast majority (79%) ruling this one out. 6% agreed with this option while 5% of those who responded requested more support for individual centres and another 5% asking for more consideration about which to close and which to cluster.

5. Summary of demographics
5.1 Online survey
Demographic data captured for those responding to the online survey is as follows: 1,044 people responded to the survey, of these 663 responded online, while 381 either responded through the children’s centres or completed a paper copy.

a. Respondents by gender
Respondents was mostly female, 83% compared to 14% male.

b. Respondents by age

72% of respondents were between the ages of 25 to 44.
82% of those who responded to this question were heterosexual while 14% did not want to answer, 3% identified as gay/lesbian or bisexual. Over Half (56%) of respondents were married or in a civil partnership, while the next biggest group were single or never married (36%).

56% of respondents were married or in a registered civil partnership.
e. Number and proportion of respondents who were pregnant or on maternity leave

15% of those who responded to this question pregnant or on maternity leave, 85% were not.

f. Respondents by identified religion

The majority of respondents said they were Christian (42%) with No religion (20%) and Atheist (13%) being the next most popular groups, 11% were Muslim.

g. Respondents identifying a disability or long term health problem
The overwhelming majority (93%) did not report any disability while, 4% said there activities were limited a little and 2% a lot.

h. Respondents by ethnicity

Q76 What is your ethnic group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Answered: 592</th>
<th>Skipped: 452</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British</td>
<td>49.68%</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Portuguese</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Spanish</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Polish</td>
<td>2.03%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Gypsy or Irish Traveller</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed White and Black African</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed White and Asian</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British Indi</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British Pakistani</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British Bangladeshi</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British Chinese</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>13.68%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American / Latin</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>2.03%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just over 50% of respondents gave their ethnicity. Half (50%) of those were white British, the next largest groups were black African (14%) and Black Caribbean (8%). Similar number of people were mixed white and black Caribbean (4%), Asian / Asian British Bangladeshi (4%), Latin American / Latin (4%) and Mixed white and Black African (3%).
i. Respondents by employment status

Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) were employed full time with 18% in part time employment. 11% were unemployed while 10% looked after the home. 7% were self-employed part time 4% full time.

j. Respondents by housing status

Around one in three (34%) people who responded to this question were private owner occupiers, similar number rented privately (16%) or from the council (16%), 12% rented from housing associations while (9%) were Lambeth leasehold owner occupiers.
The majority (85%) of people who stated their main language had English as their first language, next most popular were Spanish (5%) and French (3%).

The vast majority of respondents live within the borough, however there were some from outside the borough particularly in the south around Croydon. There were also a few outliers from further afield.
5.2 Consultation meetings
People attending the consultation meetings were asked to sign in, and information relating to attendance was entered on the children’s centre management information system (EIS). The informal nature of the events and the fact that some of those in attendance had not previously registered with the children’s centre means that there are some gaps in the data recorded around attendance. However, data available for analysis is as follows:

a. **Number of recorded adults attending consultation meetings by Children’s Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of children’s centre</th>
<th>No of recorded adults attending consultation meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Manor and Heathbrook Children’s Centres</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coin Street Neighbourhood CC</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Lane Children’s Centre</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethelred Children’s Centre</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Fawcett Children’s Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitherfield Children’s Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree House Children’s Centre</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessop Children’s Centre</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jubilee Children’s Centre</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingswood Children’s Centre</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lark Hall Children’s Centre</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz Atkinson Children’s Centre</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough Children’s Centre</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maytree Children’s Centres</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosendale Children’s Centre</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Stephens Children’s Centre</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stockwell Children’s Centre | 17  
Streatham Hub Children’s Centre | 9  
Sunnyhill Children’s Centre | 16  
Weir Link Children’s Centre | 1  
Woodmansterne Children’s Centre | 6

b. **Number of recorded adults attending consultation meetings by ethnicity**

Ethnicity data relating to those attending consultation meetings shows a different demographic to those responding online, with a much higher representation from BME groups.

Ethnicity data is not available for 25% of those attending, but of the 75% whose ethnicity is captured, the largest group were Black African (20%) followed by White British (18%) and Black Caribbean (12%).

c. **Number of recorded adults attending consultation meetings by resident ward**
The majority of those attending consultation meetings lived in Lambeth, with 21 (8%) living out of borough. These out of borough residents typically lived around borough boundaries in Wandsworth, Southwark and Croydon, with some having been placed out of borough for housing purposes. These parents typically had children attending Lambeth schools.

d. No of recorded adults attending consultation meetings by primary language

110 of the 255 adults with recorded attendance at consultation meetings have English as a recorded primary language.

A further 61 had no primary language recorded.

The remaining 84 adults had a total of 30 different primary languages recorded, with the following being the most commonly spoken languages amongst those attending: Somali; Arabic; Portuguese and French.

6. Responses from statutory bodies

6.1 Evelina London Community Health Services, Guys and St Thomas’s Trust

Monica Sherry, Head of Nursing and Universal Children’s Services, submitted a written response on behalf of Evelina London. This response noted the requirement for the council to make savings of £1.4m to its children’s centre provision, but stressed the importance of not viewing that disinvestment in isolation, but rather in the context of Lambeth being one of the most deprived areas of the borough with rising infant mortality rates and an ongoing reduction in health visiting services of 24% in the period from 2015 to date. The response notes that this reduction, combined with challenges faced by Lambeth children’s social care in Lambeth, has meant that the health visiting service has relied heavily on the children’s centre workforce to support the most vulnerable families in the borough.

The response goes on to recognise the different factors that have been considered in the development of Lambeth’s children’s centre proposals, and the partnership working between Lambeth commissioners and the Evelina management team to minimise the impact of the proposed reduction to the children’s centre offer through the Better Start programme. There is a request for the management team to be involved in an ongoing review to of the impact of changes on families, with a focus on the patterns of the uptake of services across the borough.

Finally, the response notes that while it is recognised that central government funding cuts necessitate difficult decisions, any further reduction to children’s centre provision beyond that proposed would place greater pressure on universal health services and be a retrograde step in support for the development of children, especially those from the poorest families.

6.2 Lambeth Unison

Lambeth Unison submitted a response entitled: Lambeth Children’s Centres: A Better Plan, stating that it has been ‘written in consultation with families and professionals.’

The response begins by quoting Paul van Heeswyk, Consultant Child Psychotherapist talking about children’s centres, and continues to summarise Unison’s understanding of proposals. A list of children’s centre services are included, with brief reference to the importance of children’s centres as universal provision which combat isolation and provide support for families affected by domestic violence. The response then discusses the importance of speech and language services and the impact of communication delay and difficulties on children in later life.

Unison then state that their plan is to retain 23 children’s centres, and proposes the use of reserves to support this. Information in relation to the cost benefit of early intervention services produced by the Early Intervention Foundation is referenced.
Finally, Unison ask that the council delays decisions on the future children’s centres by one year using £500k from reserves so that the financial and social implications of a reduction in provision and possible alternative funding models can be investigated.

7. **Next steps**

The report will be submitted to Cabinet on 15th April together with a final Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and covering report making final recommendations on the preferred approach.
Dear Resident,

Since early December, Lambeth council has been consulting on the future of our children’s centres. I’ve attended meetings in children’s centres across the borough, listening to parents and users about the centres they use and what their thoughts are about our proposals. I’ve seen how much parents and carers really value these services and how much of a difference they make to their children and to them.

I want to absolutely reassure you: Lambeth council is committed to protecting early years provision in the borough as much as possible despite government cuts, and we will listen to the feedback from residents and work with you to protect our children’s centres. I would encourage you to complete our online consultation, which closes this Sunday.

Because of government cuts and grant changes, Lambeth council has £1.4 million less to spend on our children’s centres each year. That’s £1 in every £3 we spend on these centres that has been removed by the government. We are opposed to that and have lobbied the government against it – but we also have to deal with the fact that the council no longer has that money to fund these services at the same level as now.

Despite the £1.4 million reduction in funding from central government, we are proposing to maintain 18 centres grouped into six cluster areas. In each cluster centres will work together to ensure we continue to provide an excellent service, with a lead provider responsible for the centres in the area. The provider will employ a team of staff including Better Start workers who will provide one to one support for families living in the area who need additional help.

For the five other centres, we are working with schools and communities to try and ensure that no building actually closes and that as many services as possible continue there, such as free childcare for eligible two-year-olds and free nursery places for three-year-olds. You can read about our plans for children’s centres in more detail in our online booklet.

The consultation closes on 10th February.

Best wishes,

Jenny

Cllr Jennifer Brathwaite
2 Examples of Tweets sent out from digital team:
Have your say on changes to Lambeth's children's centres. Find out more about our plans and how you can get involved at ..... 

Government cuts and changes to grant funding mean we have £1.4 million less to spend each year on our children's centres. Find out about our proposals to change them at ....

We're consulting on plans to reorganise our children's centres due to cuts in central government funding. Find out about our proposals and have your say...

We're proposing to protect 18 children centres in the borough, despite cuts in central government funding. Find out about our proposals and have your say...

3 Examples of emails sent out to stakeholders via Gov Delivery
For ease of view, we have included online links for an easier read as well one screen shot

https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLAMBETH/bulletins/2206391
https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLAMBETH/bulletins/220514a
Children's Centre Consultation Booklet
The Booklet was distributed to all Children’s Centres at the start of the consultation and, due to demand, a second print done in January 2019. A detachable version of the consultation survey was inserted into the booklet (see next section) and participants could leave their completed surveys in sealed ballot boxes for collection by Communications staff.
Foreword

Since 2010, the government have cut over £200 million from Lambeth council services.

During that period about 1,300 children’s centres, one third of the total, have been shut across the country due to government austerity.

Despite having one of the largest cuts in funding, Lambeth Council has managed to keep open all 25 of our children’s centres – one of the highest numbers in London.

That’s because we know that good quality early years provision makes a vital difference to young children, especially for those who come from the poorest backgrounds.

But the government has reduced the amount of money that the council can spend on children’s centres in Lambeth by £1.4 million due to changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant, on top of the cuts of over £60 million from Lambeth Council services over the next few years.

So, we are forced to make changes to the way our children’s centres work and how many centres can deliver services.

Why we value children’s centres

We know that good quality early years provision makes a vital difference in supporting young children to grow and develop, and this is especially true for children who come from the poorest backgrounds.

Sure Start children’s centres were set up under the last Labour government to bring services for young children and their parents under one roof in a centre close to their home, where they could access support and advice from qualified staff. Not simply those centres were designed to improve the life chances of young children and their families.

In Lambeth, this is our ambition as well. It’s why we worked with our partners and our communities to establish the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP) in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, a ten-year scheme to invest in children from the poorest areas in the first years of their lives. When all the evidence shows we can make the biggest difference to a child’s life, it’s why we set up this partnership in 2008.

And, it’s why we’ve protected our 23 children’s centres, one of the highest numbers of any London borough, despite eight years of government cuts.

During that time we have worked with schools, staff and our colleagues in health to maintain a range of valuable services in our centres, including early education and childcare, health visitors, parenting classes and help for parents to find work, as well as play in play activities such as stay and play.

Over the course of a year over 10,000 children access our 23 children’s centres across the borough.

Our approach

Government cuts mean we are forced to make changes to children’s centres. But in changing the way those services run, we are committed to:

- Staying local – keeping centres accessible and open for the most number of families possible.
- Protecting the vulnerable – ensuring that we continue to provide services that support the families who are in greatest need.
- Long-term value for money – ensuring services are efficiently run and fit for the future.

Section 1

Current children’s centre delivery in Lambeth

We currently have 23 children’s centres in Lambeth offering a wide range of services including:

- Stay and play groups
- Child health services
- Adult and family learning classes
- Training and employment support
- Advice and information
- Family support from Glitter Start

The services provided in each centre vary, with some centres offering a very full range of services and others having less available for children and families. The centres are distributed across the borough and families can go to any centre. Many centres go to more than one.

In 2017, over 10,000 babies and children and their families used the services provided by our children’s centres, and we know that these services make a big difference, particularly to those most in need of support.

The number of individual children over the year varied significantly between centres, from 300 at one of Lambeth’s smaller centres to over 1,000 at one of the largest.

22 of our children’s centres are run and managed by primary or nursery schools, with one, Coin Street children’s centre in the Waterloo area, run by a voluntary and community sector organisation.

Most of these organisations employ their own small teams of children’s centre staff to deliver the service.

Over the last year or two, we have been working hard to strengthen services available through children’s centres in Lambeth as part of the Glitter Start programme. This has included lots of work to make sure that the services and support offered by health partners, and particularly by health visitors, are delivered in children’s centres where this is appropriate. This so that families can get the health support they need for their child as locally as possible, and make use of other services at the same time.
Section 2

Why are we consulting on the future delivery of children's centre services in Lambeth?

Like all councils across the country, Lambeth is facing a massive financial challenge. In the past eight years, the money the council gets from government has been cut by more than half and we've had to reduce our spending by over £230 million.

But, even after having to make all those cuts since 2010, we often need to find another 10% of savings over the next four years. That's more than we spend every year on waste collection, recycling, parks, libraries, children's centres, roads and pavements and community safety combined.

And on top of that, the government has reduced the amount of money that the council can spend on children's centres in Lambeth by £14 million due to changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant. That means we can no longer afford to carry on with the services as we are.

Because the money that we have to spend on children's centres has reduced, we cannot afford to continue to provide services in the same way. We've already made lots of savings to children's centre services while keeping all centres open. But we need to look at things differently to make sure that we can continue to meet the needs of the children and families who most need support, while still keeping services in so many centres as we can so that families can continue to go to some children's centre activities regardless of where they live.

We have developed proposals that we think will mean we can keep some services in as many children's centres as possible, but to do this we will need to make changes to how our children's centres are run and managed, and to ask some families to travel a little further than they currently do to go to some groups and activities.

The core centres we are proposing are:

- Clapham Manor Children's Centre
- Clapham Children's Centre
- Empire Children's Centre
- Hitherfield Road Children's Centre
- Jubilee Children's Centre
- Kingswood Children's Centre
- Loughborough Road Children's Centre
- Magna Children's Centre
- Northcote Children's Centre
- St Stephen's Children's Centre
- Stockwell Children's Centre

Section 3

What are we proposing?

1. We are proposing to reorganise 18 of our children's centres into six geographical clusters with one lead provider per area. The lead provider would be responsible for managing and delivering services across the cluster. This would help us to plan and deliver services across the whole area, and allow us to make savings on running costs.

   The areas we are proposing are:
   - Northcote, Clapham, Norwood and Brixton: as the Brixton area is large and densely populated, we have divided this into two clusters for the delivery of children's centre services.

   The core centres we are proposing in each cluster are:

   - Clapham Manor Children's Centre
   - Clapham Children's Centre
   - Empire Children's Centre
   - Hitherfield Road Children's Centre
   - Jubilee Children's Centre
   - Kingswood Children's Centre
   - Loughborough Road Children's Centre
   - Magna Children's Centre
   - Northcote Children's Centre
   - St Stephen's Children's Centre
   - Stockwell Children's Centre

2. In each cluster area, we would have at least one children's centre offering a full programme of activities every morning and afternoon throughout the week. In these proposals, we are calling these centres 'core' children's centres. In some areas we would have more than one core centre.

Section 4

How have we developed these proposals?

To develop our proposals we have considered different things, including:

- Data about where in the borough young children aged 0-4 and their families live, and particularly where the most disadvantaged children and families live.
- Data about how young children and their families currently use children's centres, and where families travel from to use different centres.
- The distance between the children's centres, and how we can make sure that families continue to be able to use services within a reasonable walking distance of their home.
- The size and suitability of our buildings. Children's centre buildings vary considerably in size, and we know that our bigger buildings are better able to offer a wider range of services, and particularly health services. This makes them better suited to be core centres.
- Other ways in which buildings we no longer need as children's centres could be used so that we are able to keep as many services for young children and their families as we can, even if these are not children's centre services.

We have tried to develop proposals that are fair to families across the borough and will continue to meet local need as much as possible.
Section 5

What would our proposals mean for each children's centre?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical centre area</th>
<th>Children's Centre</th>
<th>Proposed future use of children's centre building</th>
<th>Closest children's centre which will provide support in the future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North London</td>
<td>Carl Street Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Ethelred Children Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eltham Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hornsey Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Stephen's Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>Croydon Manor Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heathcote Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maygrove Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risborough Children's Centre</td>
<td>Core children's centre</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Wick Children's Centre</td>
<td>Children's play group</td>
<td>Children's play group</td>
<td>Maygrove Children's Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 6

What would be available for young children and their families under these proposals?

We would revise the information about early years services on the Council’s website and make sure that families across the borough had ready access to information about how they could get the full range of services including:

1. Support for education and learning
   - All children aged 3-4 and their families would be able to go to stay and play sessions, including activities such as baby sensory and toddler time.
   - Two-year-old children living in households with a low income would be able to have 15 hours per week free early learning in a nursery or from a child-minder. The government decides which two-year-olds can have this free offer based on the family income.

2. Support for child health and well being
   - All children and families would have a minimum of five meetings with a health visitor or an early years provider. This will ensure that the child is developing according to the right rate and that any needs are recorded at an early stage. When needs are spotted, families would be given some extra help. Some of these visits will take place in the family home, and others will be offered in children's centres.

3. Support for children's social and emotional development
   - All children and families would be able to go to child health clinics held in children's centres or local health centres. To ask any additional questions they have about their child's development or health.
   - All children and families who need additional support would receive this for as long as they need it.
   - They would be offered extra help from a specialist midwife.

4. Support for parents
   - All adults would be able to get information, advice and guidance about their child's social and emotional development and ways to support this when they meet with their health visitor.
   - All parents of children aged 0-5 would be able to get help in being a parent by going to parenting courses called Triple P in their local children's centre.
   - Parents who would like further help would be able to attend Triple P workshops and/or Director Group courses. Parents of children who have special educational needs or a disability would be supported in meeting their child's needs. Parents of children with autism spectrum disorders may also be able to join the Early Bird programme.
   - Parents need some extra help to support their child's social and emotional development would be offered it.
Section 7

What other options have we considered?

We know that we will have less money to spend on children’s centres as a result of the changes made by central government.

We have looked at what this might mean for how our children’s centres work. At the moment, we have 20 children’s centres, and these teams of staff work across one, two or three centres. We have already reduced the amount of money that we spend on these centres, but need to do more.

We have looked at an alternative three options.

Option 1: No change to current model. This option is not viable as the amount of money we have available has been cut.

Option 2: Keep 23 centres open with a reduced budget. We do not think we can do this. We would not be able to pay for all the staff needed, or for the costs of using all the buildings on a full-time basis. The service that we could offer if we tried to do this would become very limited, and this would not meet the needs of children and families.

Option 3: Close more centres. We have considered whether we should close more centres so that those which remained could be core centres offering a full programme of activities morning and afternoon. We have rejected this option because we want to have the greatest possible number of children’s centres open so that as many families as possible have access to a children’s centre near to their home.

We have given very careful consideration to the centres where we are proposing to withdraw children’s centre funding. These are very difficult choices. We know that many of these centres are well used by local children and families, but we have had to propose centres which are either smaller or less well used than other centres, where the number of children under five or level of need in the local area is less than elsewhere in the borough, or where we feel families will be able to use the services they need in another nearby centre.

How can I have my say?

There are several ways you can have your say on these proposals:

1. Filling in the online consultation form
   You can fill in an online consultation form on the council website by going to: Lambeth.gov.uk/childrens-centres-consultation

2. Filling in the consultation form
   In the middle of this consultation booklet you will find a consultation form. You can complete this form and either:
   - Drop the completed form into the box provided at each children’s centre
   - Or mail it back to the address below:
     London Borough of Lambeth
     Children’s Centres Consultation
     Engagement and Consultation Team
     Policy and Communications
     PO Box 774
     WICHESTER
     SO23 9DD

3. Attending a meeting
   We will be working with our children’s centres staff to organise meetings in each of the proposed ‘cluster’ areas. You will be able to talk to us about the proposals and ask any questions you have, as well as joining in group discussions.
   Meetings will take place during December and January and children’s centres will display information on the dates as they are agreed. We will also display these dates on Lambeth Council’s website.
   The consultation will close at midnight on Sunday 10 February 2019.

What will happen next?

The consultation will close on 10 February 2019 following which we will consider all the responses received. We will then publish an updated set of proposals which will be considered by the Council’s Cabinet. It is the Council’s Cabinet which will make the final decision. After the Cabinet makes its decision we will let you know the outcome and how the decision will be implemented.

Below is the current timeline we are working to. If there are any changes to this we will update you.

- Consultation opens: 3 December 2018
- Consultation closes: 10 February 2019
- Updated proposals published: 20 March 2019
- Decision made by Council’s Cabinet: 1 April 2019
- Start of implementation of decision: September 2019.
Consultation Survey

This detachable sixteen page survey was inserted inside the booklet for completion by hand and also available online on the consultation pages of the Council’s website.

Consultation form

Name: ...........................................................
Address line 1: ........................................................................
Address line 2: ........................................................................
Postcode: ........................................................................
Email address: ........................................................................

By giving us your contact details you are consenting to the council using these details to keep you updated about this consultation and the decision-making process. You may withdraw your consent at any time by emailing engagement@lambeth.gov.uk

1 In changing the way these services run, we are committed to:
   • Staying local – keeping centres accessible and open for the most number of families possible.
   • Protecting the vulnerable – ensuring that we continue to provide services that support the families who are in greatest need
   • Long-term value for money – ensuring services are efficiently run and fit for the future.

We believe our proposals will help to deliver on these principles.

How do you think our proposals meet these objectives?

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ neither agree nor disagree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Is there anything else you want to add?

..........................................................
2 We are proposing to maintain 11 of our children's centres as core centres offering a full programme of activities morning and afternoon.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with our proposals for these centres and add any comments you wish to make about any of these centres.

a Clapham Manor Children's Centre

[ ] strongly agree | [ ] agree | [ ] neither agree nor disagree | [ ] disagree | [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

b Etheled Children's Centre

[ ] strongly agree | [ ] agree | [ ] neither agree nor disagree | [ ] disagree | [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

c Henry Fawcett Children's Centre

[ ] strongly agree | [ ] agree | [ ] neither agree nor disagree | [ ] disagree | [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Hitherfield Children's Centre</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Your comments:</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jubilee Children's Centre</th>
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<td></td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your comments:</td>
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<th></th>
<th>Kingswood Children's Centre</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Your comments:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liz Atkinson Children's Centre</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
h Loughborough Children’s Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

i Maytree Children’s Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

j St Stephen’s Children’s Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

k Stockwell Children’s Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:
3 We are proposing to maintain 7 of our children's centres as link centres offering activities on a sessional basis, either in the morning or in the afternoon. Some centres already operate in this way.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with our proposals for these centres and add any comments you wish to make about any of these centres.

a Crown Lane Children's Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

b Effra Children’s Centre (operating from Brockwell One o’clock Club)

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:

c Jessop Children’s Centre

[ ] strongly agree  [ ] agree  [ ] neither agree nor disagree  [ ] disagree  [ ] strongly disagree

Your comments:
d) Rosendale Children’s Centre

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

---

e) Streatham Hub Children’s Centre

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

---

f) Treehouse Children’s Centre

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

---

g) Woodmansterne Children’s Centre

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

---

-
4 Under our proposals, there would be a reduced service offer at our link children’s centres. Please select the top three types of services that you think we should prioritise for delivery at a link centre and tell us why.

- Stay and play groups
  - Tell us why

- Child health services
  - Tell us why

- Adult and family learning classes
  - Tell us why

- Training and employment support
  - Tell us why

- Advice appointments
  - Tell us why

- Family support from Better Start workers
  - Tell us why

- Parenting course
  - Tell us why

- Other (please state)
  - Tell us why
Central government changes have reduced the amount of money we have available for children's centres, and as a result we are proposing to reduce the number of Lambeth children's centres from 23 to 18. We are seeking to work with our partners to find alternative ways to maintain some services for children and families in the early years in each building. Under our proposals the following centres would have their funding withdrawn and they would no longer be Children Centres. Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with our proposals for these centres and add any comments you wish to make about any of these centres.

a Coin Street

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

b Heathbrook

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:

c Lark Hall

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Your comments:
d) Sunnyhill

| strongly agree | agree | neither agree nor disagree | disagree | strongly disagree |

Your comments:

---

e) Weir Link

| strongly agree | agree | neither agree nor disagree | disagree | strongly disagree |

Your comments:
Section 6 outlines the services that would be available for children and families under these proposals.

Do you have any comments you wish to make about our proposed services to:

a. Support children's early education and learning
   Your comments:

b. Support children's and families' health and well being
   Your comments:

c. Support children's social and emotional development
   Your comments:

d. Wider support for families
   Your comments:
Section 7 outlines the other options that we considered in developing these proposals.

Do you have any comments you wish to make about "Option 1: No change to current model"?

Do you have any comments you wish to make about "Option 2: Keep 23 centres open with a reduced service"?

Do you have any comments you wish to make about "Option 3: Close more centres"?
About You – Equalities Monitoring

To make sure we are providing fair services to all of Lambeth's diverse communities, and meeting the needs of different groups, it is important that we ask you a few questions about yourself. You are under no obligation to provide the information requested, but it would help us greatly if you did. The information will be used to help us plan services that meet the needs of all of its users. Your responses will be kept confidential and any information published will be made anonymous. No information that can identify you, your home or your household will be passed to any other organisations without asking you first.

1. Are you completing this survey as:
   a) A current user of children’s centre services
   b) A former user of children’s centre services
   If you ticked boxes a-b above, please go to question 2.
   c) A children’s centre employee. Name of centre:

   d) A children’s centre head or lead. Name of centre:

   e) A governor or trustee with responsibility for a children’s centre.
      Name of centre:

   f) Other (please state):

   If you have ticked boxes c-f you do not need to answer any further questions.
2. Please tell us which children's centres you have used or currently use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>1-2 visits per week</th>
<th>1-2 visits per month</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Manor Children's Centre</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colin Street Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crown Lane Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effra Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Ethelred Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Heathbrock Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Henry Fawcett Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Hitherfield Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Jessop Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Jubilee Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Kingswood Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Lark Hall Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Liz Atkinson Children's Centre</td>
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<td>Loughborough Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maytree Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosendale (Cherry Tree) Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Stephen's Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockwell Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streatham Hub Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunnyhill Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treehouse Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weln Link Children's Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodmansterne Children's Centre</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Please tell us which services you have used or currently use.

Type of service / activity: (please tick all that apply)

- Stay and play groups
- Child health services
- Adult and family learning classes
- Training and employment support
- Advice appointments
- Family support from Better Start workers
- Parenting course
- Other:

4. Please tell us if you are currently expecting a baby, and how many other children you have.

Please also indicate if any of your children have additional needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Does this child / children have additional needs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expecting a baby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-12 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9-14 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex – What is your sex or gender identity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non binary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer not to say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil partnership status?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single/Never married and never registered a same-sex civil partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or in a registered same-sex civil partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated, but still legally married or in a same-sex civil partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed or surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health / disability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, limited a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, limited a little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic origin – What is your ethnic group?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gypsy or Irish Traveller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other White background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status – What is your legal marital or same-sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregnancy / maternity – Are you currently pregnant or on maternity leave?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion, faith or belief – Which of these best describes your religion?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups / British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White and Black Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>White and Black African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White and Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
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<td>Bangladeshi</td>
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<td>Any other Asian background</td>
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<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
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<tr>
<td>African</td>
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<td>Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other Black / African / Caribbean background</td>
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Posters to advertise forthcoming consultation meetings for each centre were put up in all Children's Centres. They were of two styles according to whether the centre was proposed to be a Core or Link Centre. Examples are below.

**Proposed Core Centre**

*Have your say on the future of our Children's Centres*

We are reviewing how we provide Children's Centre services in the borough because of central Government funding cuts.

We are proposing that Clapham Manor Children's Centre will stay open and keep offering a full range of services.

Please come and tell us your views at a meeting to be held at this centre on

You can also do this, and find out about our plans for the rest of Lambeth, by completing our online consultation survey at lambeth.gov.uk/childrens-centres-consultation
Have your say on the future of our Children’s Centres

We are reviewing how we provide Children’s Centre services in the borough because of central Government funding cuts.

For Jessop we are proposing to provide Children’s Centre services in the morning or the afternoon with extra services available at nearby centres.

Please come and tell us your views at a meeting to be held at this centre on

You can also do this, and find out about our plans for the rest of Lambeth, by completing our online consultation survey at lambeth.gov.uk/childrens-centres-consultation
Appendix B: Stakeholder responses to the consultation

1. UNISON RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION
This response was submitted in hard copy format. To enable the document to be attached as an appendices, it has been scanned and converted from PDF format to Word. Some text has been lost in this process.

This consultation response was written by Lambeth UNISON in consultation with families and professionals.
Children’s Centres facilitate important social contact and interaction among children, their families and Children’s Centre Staff. Children’s Centres provide opportunities for play, learning and social connection for otherwise potentially isolated children and parents, and also offer opportunities for carers to share their practical and emotional difficulties with staff and to seek support. In this way, Children’s Centres ensure greater likelihood of vital early intervention in regard to infant mental health issues and make it possible for adverse childhood experiences to be identified and addressed.

Children’s Centres are, therefore, an essential universal provision that must remain accessible and non-stigmatising in order to ensure that they are felt by families to be welcoming and safe. We know that an important predictor for attendance and full participation in facilities for parents with young children is whether such facilities are within 'buggy -pushing distance'. It takes a village to raise a child as the African proverb says. Children’s welfare is the responsibility of the whole community and we must ensure that Children’s Centres are local, nearby and demonstrably valued by us all.

Early childhood is a time when children form attachment templates for relationships that will stay with them all their lives. It is a phase of great importance in terms of neurological development and emotional regulation but it is therefore also a time of great vulnerability when things go wrong. Levels of deprivation and trauma are very high in our population and young families need good support services to protect their mental health.

The contribution of Children’s Centres to early intervention in terms of assessment of difficulties and provision of support leads to better educational and health outcomes for our young children. However, reorganisations and cuts impact greatly on staff morale which can lead to a disruptively high turnover of staff in services where community-based continuity of relationships, support and observational oversight over time are essential.
Pre-school children do not always present with problems that are easily identified and understood at single appointments and ongoing relationships are central to good care. Staff in Children's Services need to know how to recognise signals of distress in children and to spot when vulnerable young parents may be holding themselves together to present well to Family Doctors and Health visitors. These conditions for good professional care and attunement will only be possible where services are known to be stable by staff and families, and are not subject to constant reorganisation and cuts.

2.2.1.1 Paul van Heeswyk, Consultant Child Psychotherapist

There are currently 23 children's centres in Lambeth. Under the current proposals, 5 children's centres will be closed, seven more will have their service provision cut, and staff across the borough will lose their jobs. This is described in the consultation booklet as "five of our current 23 children's centres would no longer be used for the delivery of children's centre activities."

This proposal in response to the Consultation lays out the reasons for retaining the Centres and existing staff.

2.2.1.2 The five centres threatened with closure:

- Coin Street, Bishop's ward
- Heathbrook, Clapham Town
- Lark Hall, Larkhall ward
- Sunnyhill, Streatham Wells
- Weir Link, Thornton ward

2.2.1.3 The seven centres being demoted to link centres:

- Crown Lane, Knight's Hill
- Effra, Herne Hill
- Jessop, Herne Hill
- Rosendale, Thurlow Park
- Streatham Hub, St Leonards
- Treehouse, Brixton Hill
- Woodmansterne, Streatham South

It is argued that parents, some of whom use more than one centre, will access services at a different centre if their local Children's Centre closes. Some families, often those who require extra support will not access a Centre not within buggy walking distance. Even if families were willing to travel, sessions are already oversubscribed in some Centres and fewer centres would increase demand on those which stayed open.
Children centres were introduced by the Blair Government as part of the programme against child poverty in the long and short term. The core purpose of Children’s Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in child development and school readiness, parenting aspirations and parenting skills, child and family health and life chances.

Some of their services provided by Lambeth's Children Centres include:

- Stay 'n' Play; Tiny tunes; Soup and Story; Wriggle and Rhyme; Messy Play; Sensory Room - for babies and children of different ages
- Stay 'n' Play provided for different parts of the community, including Polish, Portuguese and Spanish speakers, and Muslim families.
- Diet and nutrition: weaning and starting on solid foods
- Speech and language therapy
- Child health services
- Breastfeeding support for newmums
- Post-natal depression support groups
- LGBT parents group
- Under 20s stay 'n' play, for young parents.
- Art therapy and counselling for families with children under 5.
- Advice and support for financial and debt management
- ESOL classes and other training and employment support

The essence to the children's centre approach was the provision of specialist services to help families with additional need alongside universal services. All kinds of families go through the door.

2.2.1.4 Why is this universality important?

Some of our families who most need support don't want to access targeted support in places they think mark them out as "deprived", "troubled" or "failing"

Some families do not know they need extra support. For example Children’s Centres are key for identifying children with additional speech and language needs.

Some families who have no additional need in any indicator we use - two parents in well paid work, no diagnosed illness of impairment, adequate housing, no SEN needs - can still require additional support.

3 Children's Centres. Combating Isolation

3.1.1 Women on maternity leave have now been classed as the loneliest people in the UK. According to a recent study, a staggering 47 per cent of them feel alone while 27 per cent don't enjoy maternity leave as much as they thought they would. The data, compiled by the research consultancy company ComRes for BBC Radio 5 live, also showed that two in five women miss being at work while staying at home to look after their newborns, and
one in five wish they’d returned to work earlier. Another recent UK survey of more than
2,000 mothers by the online mothers’ networking group channelmum.com also found that
92 percent of mothers suffer from loneliness after having children, and 54 per cent feel
“friendless”. This is even greater in certain families, according to research in 2018 by the
British Red Cross and the Co-op, over 80% of mums under 30 feel lonely some of the
time, while over 40% are lonely often or always. The increase in women in employment
and political activity has eroded the gendered nature of the public and private spheres
— men in employment and civil society and women in the home. Many women, especially
though not exclusively, those without networks outside the nuclear family, find the
spheres reemerging in the first years of her child’s life as public life takes a backseat to
parenting.

Children’s Centres break the private/ public divide - bringing childrearing and childhood
into a collective public space. Mothers told us how Children’s Centres helped them get
out of the house, meet people and chat whilst looking after their children. They allow
parents to build new support networks outside their families.

Children Centres are vital for identifying and supporting families exposed to domestic
violence. Centres contribute to helping families that are experiencing domestic abuse:
raising awareness within the community, being a contact point in times of crisis, and
supporting families long term in moving on from their experiences.

Children’s centres offer a space where you can walk through the door without ever
needing to provide an excuse, and get help.

If you leave an abusive home they can provide an escape from isolation for those who
have moved to a new area or have had to break of contact with their family.
Children’s Centres allow early identification and support for those with additional speech
and language needs. Children’s centres provide a unique, accessible way for families to
access speech and language support.

Speech and Language Therapists can provide a range of beneficial services to children’s
centres, offering specialist support as well as universal and targeted support. Where there
is provision, families often access specialist speech and language therapy via their
children’s centre, and can also gain crucial information regarding supporting speech and
language development from formal or informal chats with Speech and Language
Therapists and CC staff.

This availability of speech and language support to families within an informal
environment means that families are able to access advice and information about speech,
language and communication development while they may be waiting for more detailed
SLT assessment and support.

Having speech and language support at the children’s centre is also cited as a way of
increasing the numbers of families accessing support due to the familiarity of the setting
and staff, and the comfortable environment, where they may not attend elsewhere due to
feeling anxious about a formal appointment worth a health professional. The drop in
nature is

also helpful in engaging more parents and families, particularly for those who might struggle with keeping to appointments at specific times.\(^2\)

A child can quickly fall behind if speech and language learning is delayed. Early identification increases the chances for improving communication skills. Along with library services, Children's Centres support development of pre-literacy skill. This has knock on effects on a range issues.

The association between speech and language disorders and behaviour difficulties is well established\(^3\)

Studies show substantial proportions of unsupported children with specific language impairment experience social and behavioural problems as they reach secondary school age, and that these problems increase over time, as they cannot access the curriculum and become increasingly frustrated.\(^4\)

Two-thirds of 7 to 14 years olds with severe behaviour problems have communication needs.\(^5\)

Research in Sheffield has shown that children about to be excluded from school showed high levels of speech, language and communication needs.\(^6\) Lindsay et al (2007) found, 'Parents reported that children and young people had low levels of self esteem during secondary school and high levels of emotional distress.'

Over 60% of people in youth justice estate have difficulties with speech, language or communication. In one study a high proportion (74%) of young people with the youth offending team had below average communication skills, which is significantly more than the average population (approximately 10%). There is a high level of severe communication difficulty (42%) which is significantly higher than the average population (Crew, Ellis, 2008).\(^7\)

Another study showed that over 60% of youth offending service users have speech, language and communication needs. This proportion mirrors what previous studies, above, have identified (Heritage, Virag, Mccuaig, 2011). In comparison a separate study showed that there is a high level (91%) of communication disability in young people known to the youth offending team. This is significantly greater than in the general population (10%) (Brooks, 2011). Specifically over 44% of women in the criminal justice system have

\(^2\) SLT Provision in Children's Centres - The Communication Trust

\(^3\) Humber and Snow, 2001
communication difficulties (Wagner et al., 1983). It is important to note that the incidence of communication problems is higher among women offenders than for the general population.

Low education and speech and language and literacy difficulties are risk factors for offending. A study of young unemployed men found that over 88% were described as presenting with language impairment, having some degree of difficulty with language.  

A study into young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) showed that 100% of the individuals who completed the speech and language therapy assessments presented with some degree of speech, language and communication needs, of which 50% had severe difficulties i.e. language levels more than 2 years below their chronological age. Only 21% had previously been referred for speech and language therapy.  

Up to a third of children with untreated speech, language and communication needs will develop mental health issues.

There is evidence that children may be misdiagnosed as having a conduct disorder or mental health problem when in fact they have an undiagnosed speech, language and communication needs.

Cohen and Lipsett (1991) found even very young children with undiagnosed speech, language or communication difficulties were perceived as being more delinquent/difficult by their mothers than a matched control group. 

Each of these effects of failure to provide adequate speech and language support early costs the borough in financial and social terms.

4 Our plan
We propose maintaining 23 Centres across the borough.

Finance
The medium term financial strategy states that the levels of unallocated reserves in 2018/19 are at the lower end of the acceptable limits (between 5-10% of the net casl1 limit) and therefore contribute to the Council’s sound financial position. A proposal put forward by the opposition suggests building the unallocated reserve to 9.6% rather than 10.1% of cash limits. The difference could be invested in retaining all Centres for four more years. At Joint

8 Elliott, 2009

9 Lanz, 2009

Clegg, Hollis and Rutter 1999

11 All SALT studies cited can be found in RCSLT Justice Dossier and RCSLT and Challenging and offending behaviour - RCSLT Strategy Forum the Finance Officer confirmed the proposal would comfortably meet CIPFA prudential reserve guidelines.

In addition to unallocated reserve Lambeth holds £9.6 million of reserves allocated to transition. These reserves are earmarked for spending which in the longer term will save the Council money. Spending on early intervention in the early years will save money in the short, medium and longer terms.

While we do not think that the demand for late intervention spend can ever be brought down to zero, nor should it be, this data shows that there is more work to do to provide effective early intervention to children and families who need it. The cost of late intervention: EIF analysis 2016 showed the total cost of late intervention in Lambeth as £97 million and per capita cost of late intervention at £299. Expansion of early years, early intervention work to limit demand for high-cost, statutory responses by moving resources upstream, spotting early signs of risk in children and families, and providing effective support where and when it is needed.

12 This analysis also examines where the cost of late intervention falls nationally. The £17 billion is spread across different public agencies at national and local level, from local authorities, the NHS, schools, welfare, police to the criminal justice system. Local authorities bear the largest share at £6.4 billion, followed by the NHS with £3.7 billion and the Department for Work and Pensions with £2.7 billion.

The largest individual costs are:
£5.3 billion spent on Looked After Children

£5.2 billion associated with cases of domestic violence and abuse

£2.7 billion spent on benefits for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) ¹³

¹² The cost of late intervention: EIF

¹³ The cost of late intervention: EIF analysis
These figures are costs we already bear as a result of failing to support families early enough, this spending will increase as we reduce early years spending.

_We are told we cannot afford to keep our 23 Children’s Centres. We cannot afford to lose them._ A wide range of economic studies suggest that there are significant long term returns to early investment in children during the pre-birth period and up to the age of eight years.\(^\text{14}\) Money spent on Children’s Centres saves us money in the short, medium and long term. Though the savings to local government per child per annum are greatest in 8-18 years age range, significant savings from early years intervention are reached must soon: At an individual level, the estimated total additional public spending on a child and parent with moderate needs would be in region of £2000 over the pre-birth to 5 years old period. For a child and parent with severe needs, the estimated total additional public spending is £11,220 over the pre-birth to 5 years old period. \(^\text{15}\)

The consultation makes no projection of the potential increased costs to the borough of closing centres. Any proposal to close any of our Children’s Centres should not be considered without provision and evaluation of potential costs associated with the late intervention as a result of families not being able to access the services.

5.1.1.1 We ask that the Council delays any decision on the future of our Children’s Centres by one year, using £500,000 from reserves to allow us to work together to investigate the financial and social implications of a reduction in the service and how the services could be financed, In this time we will work with community groups, unions and Council across London to lobby the government for early years funding.


\(^{15}\) Average costs will very by region. these estimates are based on The Financial Implications of early years interventions in Scotland
13th February

Dear Tony

Re: Lambeth Children’s Centre Consultation

As part of the consultation into the future of children’s centres in the borough of Lambeth, we thought it would be helpful to provide a written response from Evelina London. In addition to this feedback many of our staff will no doubt have provided their individual feedback via the online consultation form.

We recognise that due to national changes to the way in which the dedicated schools grant (GSD) can be spent, the local authority is required to operate under increasingly tight financial constraints, and make a £1.4 million saving to the borough’s children’s centre provision. We feel it is important that the proposed disinvestment in Lambeth’s children’s centres is not viewed in isolation. Lambeth remains one of the most deprived areas of the country, with rising infant mortality rates. Against this context, over the last 5 years the Lambeth health visiting service has had a 24% reduction in funding, following disinvestment in universal health services in 2015/16 and 2017/18.

Prior to this period, Lambeth Social Care was deemed ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted in 2015, and is now rated as ‘requires improvement’ following the 2018 inspection. The reduced workforce of our universal children’s services has felt the impact of ‘holding’ the responsibility of the most vulnerable children and families without adequate social services support and has relied heavily on the Better Start and family support offered by the local children’s centres to support the most vulnerable families in the borough. This partnership working was recognised in the most recent Ofsted inspection report of Lambeth Children’s Social Care which highlighted that:

“There is a good range of voluntary, community and commissioned early help services provide effective support and improve children and families’ circumstances in Lambeth. These services include 23 children’s centres, which continue to work well with partners to provide health, educational and parenting support.”
The proposed restructure suggests the closure of five children’s centres and a further seven would have their current provision reduced. As you know, Evelina London Children’s Community Services provide services in a number of the five centres that would be closed under the proposed model, including nutrition support (e.g. weaning classes), health visiting clinics, and breastfeeding support for new mums.

The Children’s Community Directorate Management Team have worked collaboratively with Lambeth commissioners to understand the impact on the delivery of health services in these settings, and ensure that services can be transferred to remaining core and link centres.

As part of the Better Start work that has been ongoing for the last year or so, collective thought has been given to ensuring that the shift from GP aligned health visiting caseloads to geographical/ corporate caseloads is now clustered around local children’s centres. We are confident that this partnership approach would help to minimise the impact of the proposed reduction of the children’s centre offer and ensure that we are able to maintain access and equitable service delivery across the borough.

We understand that significant consideration has been given to ensuring that the ‘pram push’ distance is minimised as much as possible for local families, through the proposal to maintain 18 centres grouped into six cluster areas, and we are committed to working with Lambeth Local Authority to ensure that services are maximised in the remaining centres around the needs of local families.

Following the outcome of the consultation and implementation of changes, we would welcome being part of the ongoing review to assess the impact on families, particularly understanding the patterns of uptake of services across the borough by both universal and vulnerable families.

We recognise that difficult decisions are required in light of central government funding cuts. However, it is important to note that any further reduction in children’s centre provision in Lambeth over and above those proposed in the consultation would mean a further distancing from the original concept of an open access neighbourhood centre for local families to access, and place greater pressure on universal health services. This would be a retrograde step as research recognises that good quality early years provision makes a substantial difference in the development of children, especially those who come from the poorest families.

We look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across Lambeth Local Authority, CCG and children’s centres to ensure that Evelina London provides a comprehensive universal health service to local families.

Kind regards,

Monica Sherry
On behalf of the Evelina London Children’s Community Directorate Management Team

cc. Dan Stoten; Laura Griffin
3. Streatham Labour Councillors’ submission to Lambeth’s consultation on the future of children’s centres in the borough

Cllrs Malcolm Clark and Marianna Masters, Streatham Wells
Cllrs Liz Atkins, Rezina Chowdhury and Iain Simpson, Streatham Hill
Cllrs Danny Adilypour, John Kazantzis and Clair Wilcox, Streatham South

NB this submission has been prepared after attending each of the main consultation events in Streatham, meetings with Children’s Centre staff, and conversations and correspondence with a range of local residents.

Recommendations
1) We do not support the current proposal, and are adamant after hearing parents’ and local residents’ responses that Sunnyhill Children’s Centre should continue to operate.
2) Our preference would be to have 2 core centres, at Sunnyhill and Hitherfield, in line with what happens in the North of the borough, so that we have more provision in Streatham than currently planned.
3) All three purpose-built Children’s Centres in Streatham (Sunnyhill, Hitherfield and Woodmansterne) should receive funding to continue – collectively – to provide a full range of activities and services for babies and young children, and their parents and carers, in the Streatham area.
4) A detailed examination of the classes and activities offered needs to be undertaken, to enable a more considered decision on how to make best use of each Centre’s facilities and staff. The resulting spread of activities should take into account capacity issues; providing parents options not just one often-full class.
5) The Council should make Children’s Centre funding contingent on the host site having a plan to open up either that building or their main building for greater community use. And the Council should bring in Lambeth Housing and other partners, including local voluntary sector bodies, into those discussions.
6) For the Cabinet Member to meet with Streatham Labour councillors before she and Council officers draw up the updated proposals (which are due to published on 20 March).

Labour Values vs Tory Cuts

Tory austerity has not gone away and for councils that have been dealing with it for nine years now things are more difficult than ever. Lambeth Council has lost over £230m of government funding since 2010, with a further £38m over the next few years.

Early years interventions to improve life chances, and universal provision, are at the heart of our values and actions. We are proud that as a Labour Council we have prioritised our children’s centres, keeping 23 open since 2010, at a time when Tory cuts have closed hundreds across the country.

In 2018 the government cut the dedicated schools grant, which helps to fund our children’s centres, by £1.4m. Again, in the face of those Tory cuts, Lambeth Labour stood firm and protected children’s centres for another year.

However, with further cuts in all services imposed by the Tories, it is simply not sustainable financially to keep things as they are. Children's centre funding is £4m p.a. from this we have lost £1.4m p.a. that is one third of our children's centres budget, gone. We agree that it is right to look for a sustainable solution which doesn't require us to look for the whole £1.4m from our reserves every year.
Overall rationale for maintaining Children's Centres at Sunnyhill, Hitherfield and Woodmansterne

1. Under the current plans, Streatham and Norwood areas would be significantly less well-served by Children’s Centre provision compared to other areas in Lambeth – with resulting negative impacts on those most targeted and/or in need of the activities and support.

2. The purpose-built nature of the 3 Streatham Children’s Centres – which are modern, light, and have working heating, kids’ toilets, outdoor play area, and other kid-friendly spaces and facilities – make these locations most attractive to parents.

3. These Children’s Centres are strongly tied to a place and a community, and have a community-feel. It is partly that this is what being connected to a school brings, but also the staff themselves, and the setting of the Centre within a firmly residential, family-friendly area are also important factors.

4. Travel and distance do not seem to be clear-cut factors either way. Instead, parents are motivated by the pull of specific classes/staff/peers/facilities to a particular Centre, which may not be the nearest or quickest to get to. So this means The Hub’s prominent and accessible location is not as important as the consultation proposal makes it out to be. Indeed, parents at the consultation – whilst clearly valuing the particular support given by individual staff – also reported regularly using services at Crown Lane.

5. Woodmansterne and Hitherfield Children’s Centres both serve areas that are more isolated – geographically and transport-wise respectively. The consultation is right to recognise that and maintain provision on those sites. At the Woodmansterne consultation it was made very clear that parents and carers were very unlikely to travel to Hitherfield given that 2 buses and a walk made it a much further journey compared to one bus (118 from the Vale or the High Road) and a shorter walk from Streatham South.

6. The Hub is the least suitable building to house a Children’s Centre; has the least affinity with a specific geographic community; and the building itself is rented from an external organisation, with all the risks that entails.

Specific rationale for maintaining Children’s Centre provision at Sunnyhill

Reputation

Sunnyhill Children’s Centre was one of the first in the borough to open, and has developed a reputation for providing stimulating activities for young children and a nurturing environment for their parents/carers, and a safe place to access further support. One of Sunnyhill’s aims and key successes is being seen by parents as a sympathetic place to access local and national bureaucracy.

The Centre was classed as ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted, and that excellence and ethos continues today, under the leadership of the Centre Manager and Caseworker who have worked successfully together for many years.

The Stay-and-Play sessions at Sunnyhill regularly reach capacity. The ESOL classes are very busy too. And the Chatter Time speech therapy classes are not replicated elsewhere and this also very popular. The Sunnyhill consultation meeting was one of the best attended in the area.

According to the Council’s figures, Sunnyhill had the highest number of contacts (visits) by children aged 0-4 out of the Streatham Children’s Centres in 2017/18. It was second to Hitherfield in terms of individual children who came through its doors during that time, with Streatham Hub quite a way further behind.

Need
Streatham Wells has a significantly higher number of children living in the top 20% of households of scored under the Index of Multiple Deprivation, compared to the other 3 Streatham wards. And only Streatham South has more children living in the next band (30% IMD) up. Lambeth Council figures also show that Sunnyhill serves a pocket of disadvantage literally on its doorstep (the Valley Road Estate), and there are two other Council estates of 250-300 homes each (Sackville and Mountearl/Adare) and a smaller one (Albert Carr Gardens) within a 15 minute walk.

There is a concentration of temporary housing in Streatham Wells, and the residents who live in these properties are among those most targeted for Children’s Centre provision.

The Centre has developed expertise in community engagement, working closely with local organisations such as Solace (domestic & sexual violence), Streatham Refugee Centre, Asha Projects (South Asian) and the local Somali community. Indeed the Somali Sewing Group – one of the most innovative and successful community groups of recent Streatham times – originated from and was hosted at Sunnyhill Children’s Centre.

A significant minority of the parents who use Sunnyhill come from an Eastern European background. There are specific issues of stigma – including of not wanting to claim benefits or seek support, for fear of living up to a stereotype perpetrated by right-wing media and politicians. The staff at Sunnyhill have worked hard to provide a safe space and the right conversations so these (and all) families feel they are able to apply for the benefits that by rights they are eligible for.

Issues of loneliness, mental wellbeing, parental skills, relationship stress and children’s development and special needs are not limited to any one segment of society. The Centre is open to anyone, regardless of income or postcode, and addresses an important need for more affluent and/or older mothers in the area.

Location
Sunnyhill is located on the 315 bus route, which provides a direct connection to Streatham Station, Streatham High Road, West Norwood and Balham. It is also within a 10 minute walk of the main shopping area of Streatham High Road, and Streatham Common too.

Sunnyhill’s position is much more central and more accessible to the bulk of Streatham’s population than Hitherfield.

The Centre attracts parents/carers from a wide area, well beyond Streatham Wells, many of whom prioritise the Centre’s offerings and environment over closer or more heavily-connected Centres (e.g. Streatham Hub).

The newly installed traffic-calming measures on Harborough Road (including an effective one-way system) have greatly improved pedestrian and cycle safety, and reduced congestion and ‘road-rage’ incidents.

Potential Added Value
There is a lack of community space in this part of Streatham Wells. The Valley Road Estate has no community room or other communal indoor space to hold meetings and activities for residents. Local community groups (such as the Safer Valley Road campaign and Friends of Unigate Wood) have no where nearby to meet either. Making better use of buildings could be an additional outcome of this consultation; through parallel negotiations or conditions of funding.
Alternate Solutions
In an ideal world, there would be no reduction in Children’s Centre provision and activities. We are particularly concerned about such a reduction at a time of significantly increased food bank use; the switch-over to Universal Credit; the continued falling away of safety nets during to the Tories’ austerity programme; and the instability and anxiety caused by Brexit and exacerbated by the Government’s mishandling of the process. We worry that families will slip through the net – not being able to access sessions, not having a caseworker with the capacity to deal properly with their case, and not getting the early help that they need.

Our priority is that Sunnyhill Children’s Centre, alongside Hitherfield and Woodmansterne, remains open and receives Council funding to continue its much-needed and much-valued work.

In order of preference, we support:

Option 1 – Two core centres in Streatham
This is the level of provision planned for most other areas in the borough. As the need from residents for Children’s Centre’s casework and support functions, as well as classes and activities, is high, there is a strong case for this level of provision in Streatham. It could be worth considering temporarily funding a proportion of the resulting budget gap in the Streatham area, and then to review again in a couple of years time.

Option 2 - More equitable distribution between centres
Given where we are, due to the Tory Government’s cuts and its harmful impact on Lambeth’s budget, we are also forced to take a look at more pragmatic approaches. We are not wedded to the core and link approach which was set out in the consultation. Our preference then would be to equalise the status of Sunnyhill, Hitherfield and Woodmansterne – maintaining all 3 as Children’s Centres, and more evenly balancing the activities and support provision across all 3 sites, but within an overall reduced package.

Option 3 - Sunnyhill as Streatham’s core centre
The next best option would to make Sunnyhill rather than Hitherfield the core Centre; especially now Hitherfield’s activities are split between its main building and the One O’Clock Club in Hillside Gardens, which is even further away from most Streatham residents.

Option 4 (or combined with one of the above options) – reassessing Streatham Hub
Streatham Hub provides valued adult classes, as well as the over-subscribed music course. We would like to see both continue. But it might be more appropriate for the children’s activities to be switched to one or more of Streatham’s purpose-built Children’s Centres. If the adult classes remained at Streatham Hub, a rudimentary childcare offering could be provided there, or at the Leisure Centre next door, in partnership with GLL. Or there might be a case for a wider re-think about the future of Streatham Hub itself.

We are keen to see further analysis of the existing data and also analysis of the consultation responses. We then look forward to meeting with the Cabinet Member and officers to further discuss the most appropriate solutions for Streatham’s residents, and especially those who are more vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Submission by Streatham Labour Councillors on 10 February 2019
Cllrs Malcolm Clark and Marianna Masters, Streatham Wells
Cllrs Liz Atkins, Rezina Chowdhury and Iain Simpson, Streatham Hill
Cllrs Danny Adilypour, John Kazantzis and Clair Wilcox, Streatham South

NB Cllr Seedat (Wells) is a Cabinet member and thus was not eligible to submit a consultation response
4. Larkhall Councillors’ Response to Consultation

Dear Cllr Brathwaite,

We would like to make a submission to Lambeth Council’s consultation on changes to children’s centres. The online form is, understandably, strongly geared towards residents so I hope you don’t mind us sending you our views in an email. Having spoken with and engaged with local residents, we felt it is important that we make a contribution.

Like you, we are disappointed that the Council has to make these decisions. Children’s centres are an incredibly important community resource that provide a lot more to a local area than a space for children and parents to receive support. In particular they do a great deal to support social integration and reduce social isolation.

We understand why Larkhall Children’s Centre has been identified as one of the centres for closure. The nearby Clapham Manor and Stockwell Children’s Centres, along with the soon to be reinstated Larkhall Park One O’Clock Club mean that closing this centre should have less impact on the local community than closing other Children’s Centres in the borough. However, it is disappointing that both Larkhall and Heathbrook are closing, and we would urge you to do all you can to ensure that the unique service that Larkhall Children’s Centre provides is maintained.

Residents have spoken about the particularly friendly atmosphere that surrounds Larkhall Children’s Centre, this stems in part from the smaller size of the centre but also from the attitude of staff towards both parents and children. This includes welcoming newcomers and staff engaging fully with children to get to know them and make them feel welcome. It also includes allowing flexibility in arrival times for parents who may be, understandably, late to a session and ensuring that they are still allowed to participate in that session.

Extra travel distances are a particular concern and may contribute to parents being late for sessions. Although it may only be an extra 5 to 10 minutes walking or a short bus ride, these distances can be incredibly difficult with small children or buggies. The extra time travelling can mean that parents are unable to fully appreciate sessions since they have to arrive late or leave early in order to accommodate other appointments including school pick-up and drop-off times. Timetables for children’s centres must be designed with local parents in mind.

Finally, we are particularly keen to ensure that some of the ancillary services offered by Larkhall Children’s Centre are not lost. This includes clothes swop-shops, food voucher provision, English language classes and other adult courses.

In summary, we understand why this decision has been taken but urge you to consider any way possible to keep Larkhall Children’s Centre open. If the centre must close, then it is imperative that the factors which make Larkhall Children’s Centre one of the best are learned from and replicated in remaining centres.

Regards,

Tim

Cllr Tim Windle
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