

Public Consultation Paper July – September 2017

Children's Centre Services



The County Council is proposing redesigning Children's Centre services. We are asking people who use Children's Centres, other citizens and stakeholders what they think of the plans. This document explains what those proposals are and how you can have your say.

The Consultation

What are we consulting on and why?

Cambridgeshire's first Children's Centre opened in 2005 with the aim of helping families in more deprived areas to give their children the best start in life. There has been significant growth and change in the level of provision over the past 12 years.

At the present time there are 40 designated Children's Centres across the County delivered by a combination of the County Council, schools and voluntary organisations. The contracts for externally delivered Children's Centres conclude in April 2018 and the County Council is looking at how to ensure that the money spent has the greatest positive impact on young children's development before re-tendering contracts.

Services for the families and the under 5's delivered from these centres include:

- Access to midwives and health visitors
- Family support services – trained staff providing parenting support and advice
- Advice about early years education and childcare
- Employment, training and benefits advice
- Drop-in play sessions
- A meeting place for child carers

The Centres have played a vital role in delivering early childhood services to families with young children, bringing together key services such as childcare, health visiting, midwifery, employment and adult learning into one place. We also know from our work together over many years the importance of delivering support in the community rather than over focusing on the buildings, which is why we already deliver services in over 100 different locations.

Under the 2006 Childcare Act Cambridgeshire County Council must ensure the sufficient provision of children's centres in its area to meet the local need of parents, prospective parents and young children, especially for those in the greatest need of support.

Cambridgeshire County Council has a statutory duty to consult with those affected about any proposals that may result in significant changes to, and/or the closure of, its Children's Centres, which are part of the proposed redesigned Children's Centre service.

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National and Local Context

Over recent years Government policy on supporting families and young children has changed. There is no longer a Government pot of money to pay for Children's Centres or any funding for new ones.

At the same time the Government has introduced a number of other ways to support families:

- Funding for 15 hours free childcare for two-year-olds in low income families
- Funding for 15 hours free childcare for all three and four-year-olds, and from September this year, up to 30 hours in low income families
- A Family Nurse Partnership which offers intensive and structured home visiting, delivered by specially trained family nurses, from early pregnancy until the child is two for first time mothers and fathers under the age of 19;
- A Healthy Child Programme for children, young people and families, which focuses on early intervention and prevention offering a programme of screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews, information and guidance on parenting and healthy choices.
- £5.3 million funding for the Troubled Families Programme Together for Families in Cambridgeshire, supporting work with families with complex issues. This is the current total assumed level of income from Phase 2 of the national programme, 2015-2020.

Government policy on increasing free early education means that the Council needs to look at how to create more childcare places as part of its Early Years strategy. There is an opportunity to consider this agenda alongside delivery of Children's Centre services.

Alongside these changes the County Council has over the five years 2012-2017 seen a £66.8m per annum (46% per cent) reduction in the funding received from Central Government and we have been working with partners to ensure we look to do things differently to ensure the services we are responsible for delivering are the most efficient and have the biggest impact on improving the lives of Children, Families and Communities across the County.

There has been a delay in the proposed national consultation on the future of Children's Centres over recent years. However the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres (APPG) undertook an inquiry into the future of Children's Centres in 2016. The findings of this inquiry focussed on the development of "Family Hubs" concluding that Children's Centres needed to be to be increasingly available across the whole family age range, and spectrum of need. Family Hubs should be the identified 'go to' place for a wider range of support particularly targeted to families with significant needs including mental health and relationship support. These findings have helped shape our proposals.

The proposals outlined will enable the council to deliver cost effective services while ensuring that vulnerable families have access to services they need for themselves and their children until they reach adulthood.

It is currently estimated that the proposals would save £1m per year in line with the savings target set by Council last year for 2018-19.

Cambridgeshire current and proposed delivery model by districts

There are currently 40 designated Children's Centres across the county. Children's Centre services are already delivered from other community buildings to provide easier access for families. The enhanced partnerships with midwifery, health visiting, childcare providers and schools will allow us to deliver effective support to those families that most need it where they are able to access it.

The consultation document is structured into Districts (see pages 9-19) in order to highlight the proposals at a local level.

We know there is no 'one size fits all' solution for Cambridgeshire. We want to work with local communities to agree how services can be delivered across the 5 districts of Cambridgeshire.

Where will I be able to get support?

Cambridgeshire is a large and diverse county. We know we need a flexible offer to make sure you can access our services, no matter where you live.

We will offer services in the following 4 ways:



City

In this section we are going to look at the area of Cambridgeshire where you live. This page will look at our current delivery in Cambridge City and what we need to think about when planning services here.

We will then look at how we are proposing to change our delivery in your district and ask for your feedback on that.

Things to know about City

- Cambridge is a rapidly growing city with large new housing developments, especially around the south and west of the City.
- We know that we are likely to need to offer more support to families in new communities for the first few years as the community is established.
- Cambridge is a diverse city, with more families with additional support needs in the north city, Abbey and Cherry Hinton Wards. New community areas are also demonstrating higher support needs.
- It is difficult for a number of families to access childcare across the city, particularly in Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, Romsey, and Trumpington. As the 30 hours free childcare is introduced from September this need will increase.



What we have



What we're proposing



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How things would change in the City

Current Children's Centres	Proposed Child and Family Centres	Proposed Child and Family Zones	Proposed Children's Centres that will be re-designated
Romsey Mill		Brookfields (potential shared building with health)	Romsey Mill
The Fields	Abbey Child and Family Centre (The Fields)		
Fawcett		Clay Farm (new shared use space)	Fawcett
Homerton			Homerton
Cherry Hinton			Cherry Hinton (we will look to deliver services as part of the redeveloped Library)
North Cambridge	North Cambridge Child and Family Centre (split site across North Cambridge and Chesterton)		
Chesterton	North Cambridge Child and Family Centre (split site across North Cambridge and Chesterton)		
		Central Library	
7 sites	2 Centres across 3 sites	3 sites	4 sites

More large housing developments are planned across Cambridge City and we will look to create Child and Family Zones in these locations as they develop.

Outreach Programme venues across this district would include libraries, health centres, community venues and schools.

Current Children's Centres to be re-designated in City

We are proposing that some Children's Centres would no longer be needed as Children's Centres. We would look to re-designate these spaces to meet other needs of families in the area including childcare provision, community use and wherever possible ongoing outreach provision as required. In Cambridge City these would be:

Cherry Hinton	Fawcett
Homerton	Romsey Mill
In Cherry Hinton we are proposing moving to a different building in the community to deliver outreach services as part of the redeveloped library.	
In addition we would no longer run full Children's Centre services from Fawcett School, Homerton Nursery, or Romsey Mill although they are likely to remain as outreach delivery locations.	

The full consultation document and data briefing can be found here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-centres/children-s-centres-consultation/>