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 Staffordshire
County Council

Consultation on proposed changes to Children's Centres

Introduction

Staffordshire County Council is committed to improving the health, prosperity and wellbeing of the people of Staffordshire. Delivering services that enable children and young people to get the best start in life are a critical part of that commitment. We are also determined to provide services that support the most vulnerable families and which respond to the specific needs of Staffordshire's local communities.

This document sets out three proposed practical changes to Staffordshire's Children's Centres that will contribute to this commitment. The changes will reduce bureaucracy and ensure we deliver cost effective services. Most importantly these practical changes to Children's Centres will provide the opportunity for us to shape our local delivery .

We want to work with you to improve the way we deliver services to communities and it is important that you let us have your views by taking part in this consultation.



County Councillors

Mike Lawrence Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing



Liz Staples Cabinet Member for Education and Skills



Why are we proposing changes?

We want the future of Staffordshire to be healthier, safer and stronger, more prosperous and fairer. To do this, we are putting these five core values at the centre of everything that we do and say:

- Customer and citizen focus
- Listening and responding to local needs
- Encouraging personal responsibility while protecting those who need us
- Prepared to be bold and to show leadership
- Provide efficiency and economy through innovation

We know that our early years shape how we are as adults. Early Years' services and the quality of the delivery of those services are key factors to achieve our goal for all children to have the best start in life.

Children's Centres are defined as 'a place, or a group of places, which is managed by or on behalf of the local authority with the purpose of securing early childhood services' (Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance February 2010).

They offer facilities such as stay and play groups, health services, benefits advice, parenting support, getting ready for school advice and lots more. For families that may find it difficult to access a centre there are staff that provide similar opportunities by visiting homes and running groups in the community.

We want to be able to deliver quality services that are effective, offer value for money and are delivered in ways that respond to local needs.

What does this mean?

To do this we need to make some practical changes to Children's Centres.

These include:

1. Matching and linking Children's Centres and their catchment areas with existing children's service areas to reduce duplication of service delivery, improve co-ordination between services and reduce bureaucracy;
2. Gradually withdrawing from providing local authority run childcare in Children's Centres by working with the private, voluntary and independent sector to take over the delivery;
3. Removing the Department for Education status for the three nurseries that operate within Stafford, Cannock, and Tamworth Early Years Children's Centres to bring them in line with all other Children's Centres in the county.



What are the proposed changes?

Proposal One

Proposal	Current arrangements	Proposed changes	What does this mean to my family?
To match and link Children's Centres and their catchment areas with existing children's service areas.	Children's Centres are all managed differently and have their own catchment boundary. They operate independently of one another. The rest of Staffordshire County Council's children's services have been aligned to new common boundaries and are working more closely together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To match Children's Centre catchment areas to existing county council services that support children, young people and families. Children's Centres within a district to work more closely with one another. All management and inspection arrangements will cover a number of centres which would be linked together. By doing this we would reduce administrative duplication and make best use of all our resources. To ensure Children's Centres are part of the wider profile of services for children in Staffordshire, to reduce duplication and improve co-ordination. 	<p>By doing this we believe you will have access to consistently high quality services regardless of which Children's Centre you use.</p> <p>For families who have children of different ages, support and care services will be coordinated better.</p> <p>We should avoid duplication and as such improve what we can offer to families.</p>

What this proposal would look like in each district

Where sites are linked together services would be offered at all sites as part of one Children's Centre arrangement. The services to be offered will reflect the needs of the immediate community surrounding each site.

District	Proposed Main Sites	Proposed Link Sites	District	Proposed Main Sites	Proposed Link Sites
Moorlands	Staffordshire Moorlands		Newcastle	Maryhill	
	Cheadle	Werrington, Blythe Bridge		Audley	
	Leek Rural	All Saints, Leek		Newcastle Children's Centre	Clayton, Madeley
		Crackley Bank		Oaklands, Hempstalls	

East Staffs	Tynsel Parkes	Rocester , Barton
	East Staffs Children's Centre	Queens Street, Stretton
	Stapenhill	Winshill
District	Proposed Main Sites	Proposed Link Sites
Lichfield	Springhill	Boney Hay
	Charnwood	Saxon Hill, Willows
South Staffs	Landywood	Featherstone
	Wombourne	Kinver
	Perton	Brewood

Tamworth	Glascote	Exley, Amington
	Heathfields	
	Tamworth Early Years Children's Centre	
	Leyfields	
District	Proposed Main Sites	Proposed Link Sites
Cannock	Western Springs	Churchfield
	Cannock Chase Children's Centre	Bridgetown, Huntington
	Hednesford	Norton Canes
Stafford	Manor Hill	Stone Rural
	Stafford Children's Centre	Hixon
	Silkmore	Wildwood
	Castle Church	Gnosall

Proposal Two

Proposal	Current arrangements	Proposed changes	What does this mean to my family?
Gradually withdraw from local authority ran childcare in Children's Centres	Staffordshire County Council manages and delivers childcare in Moorlands, Newcastle, Cannock, Stafford, Tamworth and East Staffs Children's Centres. We are keen to look at other options for providing high quality childcare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The childcare provided by the local authority only accounts for 2.8% of the overall childcare places in Staffordshire. We propose to look for opportunities within the wider private and voluntary childcare sector to provide a high quality service. We estimate this would save approximately £0.8m of public money and would also help support local businesses and the voluntary and private sector to grow. 	These proposed changes may result in different organisations providing childcare in some Children's Centres or the local community. Where this may happen, we will ensure the same high quality standard is offered and regulated in accordance with the Childcare Act 2006 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Proposal Three

Proposal	Current arrangements	Proposed changes	What does this mean to my family?
Remove the Department for Education school status for the three nurseries that operate within Children's Centres to bring them in line with all other Children's Centres in the county.	Three of the Children's Centres were built on school sites and therefore the nurseries within them continue to be registered as schools. This makes no difference to the way the nursery education is delivered in these centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To bring them in line with all other Children's Centres in the county we propose to remove the Department for Education school status in these three nurseries. They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandyford Nursery School within Stafford Children's Centre, Blackfords Nursery School within Cannock Chase Children's Centre and Castle Nursery School within Tamworth Children's Centre 	This is purely an administrative change and by removing Department for Education school status there will be no changes to the delivery of your child's early education as the Early Years Foundation Stage is a legal requirement for all providers.

Advantages to the proposals:

- We will reduce bureaucracy and make better use of public funding.
- We will be able to ensure a high quality standard of service for children aged 0- 5 years and their families across the whole county.
- Staffordshire County Council can support high quality childcare providers to develop their services for the benefit of local communities and enable the local economy to grow.
- Some vulnerable children are transported long distances to access childcare; this proposal provides the opportunity to benefit families so that they can access childcare closer to home and reduce transport costs.
- We can better focus our support on 'children in need' and make sure they are ready for school.

- Families will have a greater level of choice of day care provision.
- Even more efficient delivery of services and administration.
- By aligning with other children's service boundaries we will improve the co-ordination of support for families, avoid unnecessary duplication and provide a more integrated approach to care and support.

Disadvantages to the proposals:

There may be some changes to the location of where specific services are delivered, dependent upon the needs of particular communities.

The gradual transfer of Staffordshire County Council childcare to a new provider may mean some families have to adjust to new arrangements.

How can I have my say?

We are keen to hear your views on our proposals. Your feedback is important to us and we promise to listen to all of the comments and ideas received. You can feedback in a number of ways:

- Online** – please tell us what you think by completing a feedback form online by visiting www.staffordshire.gov.uk/childrenscentreconsultation.
- Email** – please email your views to childrenscentreconsultation@staffordshire.gov.uk
- By post** – please write in or send us your comments by completing a paper copy of the feedback form and returning it to:

**Children's Centres Consultation
Early Years and Childcare Service
Wedgwood Building
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH**

Please note we will not acknowledge receipt of individual feedback forms.

- Information sessions** will also be available near you. See www.staffordshire.gov.uk/childrenscentreconsultation for more details or ask in your nearest Children's Centre.

If you need help to fill in the feedback form you can go to your local Library or Children's Centre.

The consultation will begin on 16th January 2012 and will last for eight weeks. The closing date for all comments is 5pm on 11th March 2012.

What happens next?

When the consultation is complete Staffordshire County Council will consider all responses made and this will feed into the final decision. A summary of the final proposals and the responses received will be reported to the county council's cabinet in Summer 2012 who will make a final decision.

If you would like this leaflet and/ or feedback form in another language or format (e.g large text), please telephone: 0300 111 8000 or email: childrenscentreconsultation@staffordshire.gov.uk



Children's Centres Consultation

Feedback Form

Before completing this feedback form we advise you to read the consultation materials provided. To view this document and for more information you can visit www.staffordshire.gov.uk/childrenscentreconsultation. Please note your views must be submitted to us by **5pm on Sunday 11th March, 2012**. All survey responses will be treated confidentially.

1. Have you ever received any of the following support from a Children's Centre(s) in Staffordshire?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Information and advice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Parenting support | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Support with my own or child's disability or special needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Other (please specify)

2. What do you think of the proposed changes to Children's Centres in Staffordshire?

3. How do you think these proposals may impact on you and/ or your family?

4. How do you think these proposals may impact on your organisation, the parents and children you support, and the service that you might provide to them?

5. Is there anything else you would like us to think about as part of the development of Children's Centres in Staffordshire.

6. Please let us know other comments you have on our proposals

Tell us about yourself

To help us understand views on proposals we would value the following optional details. You do not have to complete this section, but it would be very helpful if you did as the information will help us to understand the impact that the proposed changes will have on communities.

7. Which group best describes you? (please tick all that apply)

- User of a Children's Centre for day care
- User of a Children's Centre for other activities
- Resident (individual)
- Parents Group
- Community Group
- School
- Employee of Staffordshire County Council
- Commissioned Early Years Service Provider ie., funded by the council
- Other local Early Years Service Provider, ie., not funded by the council
- Elected councillor/ MP
- Other (please specify)

8. How many people live in your household?

- Number of adults (aged 16+)
- Number of children (aged 0-4)
- Number of children (aged 5-16)

9. Are you?

- Male Female

10. Your age - are you:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 16 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-18 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19-24 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 65+years |

11. I would describe my ethnic origin as:

- White-British
- White-Other
- Mixed Heritage
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Chinese
- Other

Other Ethnic group, please state:

12. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes No

13. If you consider yourself to be disabled, please specify:

- Communication
- Mobility
- Hearing
- Physical
- Learning
- Visual
- Mental Health
- Other

Other, please give further details if you wish:

Please add your personal details (information provided here will not be published).

14. Name

15. Organisation (if applicable)

16. Address

17. Postcode

18. Date

Thank you for completing the feedback form.

If you are returning a paper copy please send to:

**Children's Centres Consultation, Early Years and Childcare Service,
Wedgwood Building,
Tipping Street, Stafford,
ST16 2DH.**