

Early Childhood and Family Service – transforming our children’s centres Public consultation

Questions for members

Is my local children’s centre going to close?

We are proposing to change how we deliver the whole service. A proposed new early childhood and family service will offer an enhanced service in your area. We think that we can make better use of our money by spending it on services, rather than managing buildings. We also want to make sure that help is getting to more families that really need it. We think we can do this better by working out in communities and visiting families at home, rather than relying on people to visit children’s centre buildings.

These are only proposals at this stage and we are keen to get people’s views on the suggested new service.

How many children’s centres will there be?

At the moment we have got 53 designated children’s centres. We are proposing 7 of these are used as early childhood and family service bases. We expect to increase the number and range of buildings and spaces that are used for the delivery of services to families.

What will happen to the children’s centre building in my area?

If the proposal goes ahead, we will explore future uses for any centres that are no longer used as designated children’s centres. We would like to hear people’s ideas about alternative use, especially for children aged 0-5 and their families. It may be that some centres continue to be used by the early childhood and family service or childcare providers. We welcome ideas.

Are all current designated children’s centres the same?

Not all designated children’s centres are the same or used in the same way. Some of the buildings are underused, others are used for childcare, some we lease, some are on school sites, or are a space in another building such as a library, and some are purpose built.

Where will people go for information and advice about how to support their child?

If the proposal goes ahead parents who need general advice on parenting or childcare, or have a concern, will be able to use our improved online resources and chat facilities. We are also looking at how we can build capacity in local communities, by supporting locally run groups and peer support. Information and advice will also be a part of the focussed group and one to one support offer to families in community venues and homes.

It’s important to note that the Healthy Child Programme will also continue and will include support and advice on development and health.

How much will people have to pay to take part in activities?

The costs of these will vary, depending on what the activities are and who is running them. There will still be free support available to families in need. We want to improve our Norfolk Directory, so there's more information about the activities, clubs and events running for families in communities.

How will families get to the proposed bases, it's a long way from some parts of the district to the base?

Families will not need to visit these bases to access activities or support. The proposed model aims to deliver activities in local communities and support in people's homes. We want to increase the range of places people can access services by using more community facilities. Some of our existing centres are difficult for some families to access and by developing a service that works out of existing community buildings we think we can make it easier for people to get the support they need.

Where will people go to get their baby weighed?

The health visitor will be able to give them details on where to get their baby weighed locally. Scales are already available in many health centres and libraries and we expect this to continue.

What will happen to the staff in the current children's centres?

We appreciate that this may be a difficult time for staff. Although we don't directly employ the staff, we are working with the organisations that run our children's centres so that they know what is happening and can be involved in our consultation process and any subsequent changes to services

How will staff get equipment out and about to families if there is no dedicated building?

This is something that we will be exploring with any future service provider as part of taking services out to families. We want to reassure families that if they have particular needs, or require specific resources this will be considered as part of any future service arrangement.

How will parents meet other parents if there isn't a designated children's centre to go to?

We know that parenting is tough and we want parents to be able to create links, friendships and support one another. Our proposal aims to support and develop what is already working in local communities and deliver outreach from more locations. There are a range of play sessions and groups for families already and we want to support others to set up their own groups. We're also developing our online resources so that families have a really comprehensive directory of what's out there and we'll be developing chat facilities, so that parents can talk to each other, meet up and create local networks. The proposed service would also directly deliver group work and support to families with the greatest need.

What sort of thing could the buildings be used for if they won't be used as children's centres?

We would like as many of the buildings as possible to be used to support families with children aged 0-5, including childcare. We want to use the consultation to get people's ideas about how these buildings can be used in future.

My children's centre is currently in a school. Will this affect the school?

No. Some children's centres are run on school sites but their budget is entirely separate, so this will not impact on the day to day running of the school.

When will the changes happen?

If the proposals go ahead then the new service will begin in October 2019.