

Appendix 1

Children's Centre Consultation Plan – June 2011

This consultation seeks to inform the public and seek their views on changes to the delivery of Children's Centres in Thurrock. Throughout the development of Children's centres community consultation has sought to inform and support our planning and this approach will be continued. In addition there is a statutory requirement to consult before making significant changes.

We are consulting on proposals to reduce the number of Local Authority run Children's Centres to five and to develop a partnership delivery model for a further four, this means that six centres across the Borough could close.

We intend:

- To allow adequate for those wishing to respond to have the opportunity to do so.
- To provide sufficient information for those being consulted to form a considered view on the matters on which they are being consulted
- To tailor the consultation process to the scale of the changes
- To make clear how the views of those who use the children's centre and the broader community will be taken into account.

This plan is being developed to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to consultation and that there is consistency across the Borough and through our partners.

The consultation will run from 13th June 2011 to 2nd September 2011 there has been some initial publicity in the run up to the commencement of the consultation as the decision to consult was reported in the local paper and in addition schools and partners based within children's centres have been notified that the consultation will take place.

Consultation methods

A range of methods will be used to ensure differing needs are taken into account, some specific audiences particularly those seldom heard are consulted and participation is encouraged.

Appendix one details the methods and target audiences but these can be summarised as:

- Letters to partners
- Web and paper response mechanisms in place
- Use of local media and publications to publicise consultation
- Local consultation groups to inform and gather views
- Consultation will include the following groups:
 - o Local families who use the centre
 - o Children's centre staff and their trade unions
 - o Advisory board members
 - o The wider community
 - o Local service providers located in and linked to children's centres

- Schools, particularly those that share their site with a children's centre
- Elected members

We will work with partners to ensure that we also consult with groups who do not currently use the centres and those who are seldom heard, these include:

- Young parents
- Families from minority ethnic groups
- Disabled parents
- Parents of disabled children / children with SEN
- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling show people
- People who have difficulty reading, writing or speaking English
- Parents on low income

Evaluation and feedback

Once closed, the consultation responses will be reported back to Cabinet and recommendations taking these into account will be made. The Cabinet decision will then be publicised across the Borough.

The decision on delivery of Children's Centres rests with Cabinet and therefore it will be made clear to respondents that they have the right to challenge the process but not the decision.

Following the consultation we will evaluate the process and include representative respondents in this process. Findings from the evaluation will be used to inform practice in future work.

Product – what we will produce	People – who will be involved	Process – how we will do it	Resources – what we will need	Timing – when it will happen
Talking walls – to allow people across the community to come and chat through the proposals and staff to record the key feedback on the 'wall'	One in each locality at local school or public place (to be determined in each locality)	Locality managers to set up and ensure they provide the target families who may not have used the centre in the past	Staff time Display boards (use existing) Materials	13/6-8/7/11
Questionnaires – without staff	To be placed in libraries, children's centres, health clinics	Locality outreach workers to identify key places for questionnaires	questionnaires	20/6-2/9/11
Questionnaires – with staff support	To be used at parenting groups, Sunshine centre, Health	Locality managers and outreach workers to target key	Staff time questionnaires	20/6- 2/9/11

	Clinics and other local non children's centre venues by outreach workers	groups and work with partners to gain responses from existing groups		
Consultation with users of partners services such as Coram / FIP / CAB	To encourage participation by seldom hear groups	Locality managers and outreach workers.	Staff time	27/6-2/9/11
Questionnaires with partners	To be used to seek views from key partners	FIS to send out to key partners	Staff time	27/6-2/9/11
Consultation on e portal web page	To enable online responses	Participation and Community Engagement Manager to submit and manage	Staff time	13/6-2/9/11
FIS text alert to parents directing them to consultation	To promote the consultation	Participation and Community Engagement Manager to arrange	Staff time	20/6/11
Local media advertisement	To promote consultation	Participation and Community Engagement Manager to link with corporate communications team	Staff time Cost of advertisement	Wc 13/6/11
Email information to staff to support participation	To promote consultation	Contracts and Performance Manager	Staff time	WC 13/6/11
Contact with elected members (to build on meetings already held with Conservative and Labour group)	To promote consultation and seek views of elected members	Strategic Leader – Early Years, Families and Communities to make contact with ward members	Staff time	20/6/11-30/7/11