

Consultation on the proposal to change the character of several Hampshire Children's Centres

1. Background

Hampshire County Council currently provides services to children under five and their families through 60 Sure Start children's centres. This figure, following local consultation and national agreement, is proposed to increase to 85 centres by March 2010 meeting the Government's target for every community to be served by a children's centre which for families living in more rural and isolated areas will be through the centre's outreach programme.

The number of children's centres to be developed in Hampshire was clearly set out by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and this development is overseen by the government's agent managing the roll-out and implementation of children's centres, Together for Children (TfC). The requirement was for Hampshire County Council to provide a minimum of 53 children's centres in phase 2 in addition to the seven that had been developed in phase 1 with a further 25 being added in phase 3.

The guidance further required the County Council to develop full core offer children's centres within the top 30% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The number of full core offer children's centres was agreed by TfC and the DCSF.

A full core offer children's centre is required to have integrated early education and childcare on site or within 0.5 miles of the centre, to employ a fully qualified early years teacher and to have opening hours of five days per week, 10 hours per day, 48 weeks of the year. This differs to a graduated centre which does not have the same requirement with regard to integrated early education and childcare and employing a teacher, and whose opening hours are reduced to 7.4 hours per day. Both full core offer and graduated centres are required to deliver a range of other services including links to Jobcentre Plus and childminders, access to health services, family support and the provision of advice, information and guidance.

2. Why is Hampshire County Council consulting on the proposed changes?

Over recent months it has become clear through discussions with TfC, that the requirements have changed and there is now greater flexibility regarding the number of children's centres that have to be developed by Local Authorities. Together for Children now requires the County Council to strategically review both the overall number and the geographical make-up of its children's centres.

Children's centres should now only be designated as full core offer if a minimum of 50% of the under fives in their Notional Catchment Area (NCA) live within LSOAs in the top 30% of the most deprived areas.

The proposed changes have been discussed in full with TfC who are supportive of the approach.

3. What are the proposed changes and how will it impact on services?

The proposed changes are as follows:

(a) Butterflies Children's Centre and Dragonflies Children's Centre - Rushmoor

- The changes would be that Butterflies Children's Centre serving the wards of Westheath and Empress and Dragonflies Children's Centre serving the wards of Cove & Southwood and St Johns would be merged. The merged centre would remain a graduated offer centre (a children's centre without childcare) based within the existing Butterflies Children's Centre building and would serve 1404 under fives.
- Currently the two centres have joint management arrangements as well as some joint delivery and the proposed changes have been identified by taking this into account.

(b) Owls Children's Centre – Rushmoor

- Owls Children's Centre is currently serving the wards of Mayfield, Fernhill and Grange and this will need to have its NCA adjusted to take in parts of Empress ward, increasing the number of under fives by 179 to 1429. This adjustment is necessary in order to maintain an acceptable number of under fives (around 1400) in each NCA, a proposed figure discussed and agreed with TfC and thus to allow the merger of Butterflies and Dragonflies
- Within this area families' move across all of the NCAs to access services due to its densely populated nature. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the proposed change will have a detrimental effect on service delivery to families.

(c) Mill Hill Children's Centre and Small Steps Children's Centre - Havant

- The changes would be that Mill Hill Children's Centre serving the ward of Stakes and Small Steps Children's Centre serving the ward of Waterloo would be merged. The merged centre would remain a full core offer centre (a children's centre with childcare) based within the existing Mill Hill Children's Centre building and would serve 1012 under fives.

- The two NCAs are currently very small and families currently access services across both due to the nature of the area. Additionally the two centres have joint management arrangements as well as some joint delivery in place currently and the proposed changes have been identified taking account of these issues.

(d) Hillside Children’s Centre and East Hants NCA 7 Children’s Centre – East Hants

- The changes would be that Hillside Children’s Centre serving the wards of Liss, Whitehill Walldown and The Hangers and Forest and East Hants 7 Children’s Centre serving the wards of Selbourne, Downland and Binstead and Bentley would be merged. The merged centre would remain a graduated offer centre (a children’s centre without childcare) based within the existing Hillside Children’s Centre building and would serve 909 under fives. The management would be provided through the existing arrangements at Hillside Children’s Centre.
- The areas covered by the two centres is very rural and the proposed change would allow for the use of the mobile unit thus more effectively delivering services to a dispersed community.

(e) The Windmill Children’s Centre and The Sails Children’s Centre - Eastleigh

- The changes would be that The Windmill Children’s Centre serving the wards of Bursledon and Old Netley and The Sails Children’s Centre serving the wards of Hamble-le-Rice, Butlocks Heath and Netley Abbey would be merged. The merged centre would become an enhanced graduated offer centre (a children’s centre without the need for childcare) based within the existing Windmill Children’s Centre building and would serve 1055 under fives.
- Currently the two centres have joint management arrangements as well as some joint delivery. Additionally, there have been some difficulties in securing a separate base for The Sails Children’s Centre and the proposed changes have been identified taking account of these issues.
- As an enhanced graduated model children’s centre there is no requirement to provide childcare, however in this case the existing childcare contract would continue. There will no longer be a requirement for the centre to be open 10 hours a day and this could be reduced to 7.4 hours a day based on local need and following consultation with families.

(f) The Phoenix Children and Young People's Centre – New Forest

- The change would be that The Phoenix Children and Young People's Centre, serving the wards of Milton, Barton, Bashley, Becton, Hordle, Milford and Fernhill, becomes a graduated rather than full core offer children's centre. This would mean that there would no longer be a requirement to provide childcare or for a Children's Centre Support Teacher to be employed at the centre. The centre would be required to open 7.4 hours a day based on consultation with families and the needs of the area rather than the 10 hours required for a full core offer centre.
- The proposed change supports a more sustainable model for both the children's centre and the childcare provision as it allows more flexibility in the shape of service delivery.

4. General

There will be no changes to staffing, including the management structures, in the short to medium term. However when vacancies arise the situation will be assessed as to whether or not to fill the vacant post.

Families and practitioners will not see a change to the delivery of services. All of the areas will still be served as before and families still have a choice as to which children's centre they attend regardless of where they live.

5. Will I have the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask questions?

Yes. A consultation meeting has been arranged for parents, carers, practitioners, and other interested members of the community for each of the centres affected as outlined in the list below.

At the meeting you will have the opportunity to hear County Council officers explain the reasons for the proposal and the process and timescales to be followed but, most importantly, they will want to hear your views on the proposal. These will be reported back to County Councillors on 10 March 2010.

Children's Centre	Date	Time	Location
Butterflies CC, Dragonflies CC & Owls CC	25 th January 2010	13.30 – 15.30	Owls Children's Centre, Mayfield Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8LH
Mill Hill CC & Small Steps CC	27 th January 2010	10.00 – 12.00	Mill Hill Children's Centre, Mill Road, Waterlooville, Havant, PO7 7DB
Hillside CC & East Hants NCA 7 CC	22 nd January 2010	13.00 – 15.00	Heath Children's Centre, Readon Close, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4AN
The Windmill CC &	28 th	14.30 –	The Portal Room, Castle Hill,

The Sails CC	January 2010	16.30	Hampshire County Council, Winchester. SO23 8UG
The Phoenix CC	15 th January 2010	13.30 – 15.00	The Phoenix Children and Young People's Centre, Culver Road, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 6SY

How can my views be heard?

Your views can be expressed in the following ways:

- Via the consultation meeting
- In writing using the attached response form.
- By contributing to a joint response, if one is to be provided, by the children's centre Parents Forum or Partnership Board
- By telephone directly to the Children's Centre Services Team on 01962 847651
- www.hants.gov.uk/childrenscentres

What happens next?

Consultation responses will be carefully considered by Hampshire County Council on 10 March 2010.

If the proposals are accepted then the changes will be implemented quite swiftly but managed in a carefully considered manner to minimise any impact on services.

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Response Form

Please indicate your view by placing a tick in the appropriate box against the centre you wish to comment on.

Name of centre	Yes, I agree with the proposed changes	No, I do not agree to the proposed changes
Butterflies CC & Dragonflies CC		
Mill Hill CC & Small Steps CC		
The Windmill CC & The Sails CC		
Hillside CC & East Hants NCA 7 CC		
The Phoenix CC		

Comment: *(please continue overleaf if necessary)*

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Which of the following best describes your connection with either children's centre? *(please tick only one, which should be your main interest)*

Parent/carer of child who accesses services	(please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of children's centre staff		<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of Partnership Board		<input type="checkbox"/>
Practitioner delivering services for under 5s		<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of the community		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please state)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>

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Signature:

Date:

Please return this slip to your local children's centre by **Friday 12th February 2010**

OR to the address below by **Friday 12th February 2010**

Janet Hoff, Children's Centre Services Manager, Children's Services
Department (Southside Offices), Hampshire County Council, The Castle,
Winchester SO23 8UG

Schedule of consultation meetings and attendance

Date: Friday 15 January 2010 - 13:30 – 15:00
Venue: The Phoenix Children's Centre
Attendees: 7

Date: Friday 22 January 2010 - 13:30 – 15:00
Venue: The Bluewood Centre
Attendees: 0

Date: Monday 25 January 2010 - 13:30 – 15:00
Venue: Owls Children's Centre
Attendees: 7

Date: Wednesday 27 January 2010 - 10:00 – 11:30
Venue: Mill Hill Children's Centre
Attendees: 15

Date: Thursday 28 January 2010 - 14:30 – 16:30
Venue: The Portal room, Castle Hill
Attendees: 1

Date: Thursday 4 February 2010 - 15:30 – 17:00
Venue: The Windmill Children's Centre
Attendees: 15

Consultation meeting The Phoenix Children's Centre

Date: Friday 15 January 2010
Time: 13:30 – 15:00
Venue: The Phoenix Children's Centre

The meeting was attended by:

Janet Hoff – Children's Centre Services Manager
Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager
Francesca Binyon – Planning & Performance Officer (Children's Centres)

Issues raised:

- Where was this consultation advertised – did you contact the local paper?
- Have PCT/JSLA been invited?
- Could this advantage highly populated areas?
- Can EECU data be confirmed?
- This move could complicate Whistlestop using the crèche room as there is no where to put the children who use the room 3 x per week
- Would the Arnewood site be part of the deal?
- Is there parking planned at Arnewood?
- How do you ensure working with NHS families who need and not demand?
- What is the centre going to lose?
- How will the community receive the message of opening hours?
- What is the average of under 5s in the county?
- If there are groups all over the place what do we do about transport?
- Will the CCST still be based here?
- What budget changes will there be?
- What happens if there is a dramatic change in the IMD?
- Is there more flexibility if it's a graduated centre?
- There is insufficient/no provision for 0-2 years in New Milton.
- As the level of deprivation in the area is very high how will people be able to go to work?
- Seems less flexibility in new proposals.
- What happened to the money from the sale from the New Milton boys club, which was supposed to be for provision of early years childcare in New Milton?

Consultation meeting Hillside & East Hants 7 Children's Centres

Date: Friday 22 January 2010

Time: 13:30 – 15:00

Venue: The Bluewood Centre

The meeting was attended by:

Janet Hoff – Children's Centre Services Manager
Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager

Issues raised:

No attendees

Consultation meeting Dragonflies/Butterflies Children's Centre

Date: Monday 25 January 2010

Time: 13:30 – 15:00

Venue: Owls Children's Centre

The meeting was attended by:

Janet Hoff – Children's Centre Services Manager
Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager
Francesca Binyon – Planning & Performance Officer (Children's Centres)

Issues raised:

- What are the nos. of families from out of the county using the centres?
- Why do they access Owls and not Butterflies/Dragonflies?
- How many families are duplicated?
- What staffing structure changes will be made?
- Concern expressed if services are being taken away as there are a lack of pre school places in the Rushmoor area
- Do FSOWs work outside their NCA?
- Will communities be served in the future as they are now?
- Is NCA based on school catchment?
- Concern was expressed about families who live on the edge of the NCA, which is not within walking distance of the centre?
- Nepalese families are increasing, will the centres accommodate these changes in the community?
- Families need this service, it is crucial this provision stays.
- The number of under 5s would increase dramatically at Owls should the merger go ahead, does this include all of those using the facilities that do not have a centre in their area?

Consultation meeting Mill Hill/Small Steps Children's Centre

Date: Wednesday 27 January 2010

Time: 10:00 – 11:30

Venue: Mill Hill Children's Centre

The meeting was attended by:

Janet Hoff – Children's Centre Services Manager
Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager
Mike Newman – Quality & Performance Officer

Issues raised:

- Staff consultation taken place before this meeting; will reduce estart problems but concerns raised regarding impact on budget and childcare.
- Is designation meeting booked for the 15 March to go ahead?
- Issue raised concerning outreach venues.
- If the majority of people do not want the merger will it still go ahead?
- It is a guarantee that all staff will keep their job?
- If there are job losses people will not back the merger.

Consultation meeting The Windmill & The Sails Children's Centres

Date: Thursday 28 January 2010

Time: 14:30 – 16:30

Venue: The Portal room, Castle Hill

The meeting was attended by:

Janet Hoff – Children's Centre Services Manager
Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager
Francesca Binyon – Planning & Performance Officer (Children's Centres)
Sally Taylor – Quality & Performance Officer

Issues raised:

- Why was the meeting based in Winchester?
- Nursery provider not informed of consultation why?
- How many managers will there be?
- Does the nursery contract need to be signed and returned?
- Will it be a requirement in 2011 for centres to be linked to nurseries?

Consultation meeting The Windmill & The Sails Children's Centre

Date: Thursday 4 February 2010

Time: 15:30 – 17:00

Venue: The Windmill Children's Centre

The meeting was attended by:

Richard Vaughan – Children's Centre Project Manager
Francesca Binyon – Planning & Performance Officer (Children's Centres)
Sally Taylor – Quality & Performance Officer

Issues raised:

- Would it not be sensible to amalgamate the centres after March 2011 because of funding changes?
- What is an enhanced graduated model?
- If unable to recruit this may impact on outreach work for Hamble and Netley.
- If staffing levels are to remain the same until March 2011 are temporary contracts going to be renewed?
- Is there going to be a safeguard on provision?
- Centre needs to be equally committed to Netley and Hamble.