

Bedford Borough Children's Centres 2021

Have your say on proposals for Children Centre services in Bedford Borough

What is a children centre?

Children centres in Bedford Borough support families from pregnancy until their child reaches 3 and support school readiness until a child reaches 5 years old. Children centres work with local midwives, GP's, health visitors, nurseries and community groups to make sure families get the support they need.

We propose to:

- Make it easier for families to access Children Centre advice and support by providing online groups and services using digital technology.
- Create Children Centre services in areas of greatest need, including the new housing development areas, by bringing services back to where the community needs them to be.
- Ensure Children Centre buildings are used for children centre services but also other early years activities for vulnerable or working families.
- Enhance activities and services for vulnerable families whilst ensuring there continues to be access to services for all families with young children across the Borough. Introducing a charge for some universal services may help to achieve this

Things we have considered when making our proposal:

We believe Children Centre services are for the community, by the community with the community. We recognise that Bedford Borough communities have changed since we first built the Children Centres over 10 years ago and we want to provide a flexible service that meets the changing needs of families and the communities where they live to ensure children aged 0-5 years old and their family have the best support and start in life.

We have also considered:

- Bedford Borough Children Services Outcomes framework principles: Live safe and be safe, fulfil potential, develop resilience and enjoy good health and wellbeing
- New housing developments for example in Wootton, Stewartby, Wixams, Great Denham
- The number of families using each children centre building
- School readiness – Supporting outcomes for children when they turn 5
- Support for families most in need
- The Children's Centre buildings which can operate the most safely in a COVID secure way
- The way that technology has shaped service delivery over the last six months, since March 2020
- That there are some groups where there may be an increased need for services for example those impacted by Domestic abuse

Therefore, we proposing that the following is considered:

Online digital offer

We know that families want information, guidance and advice to be easily accessible. We also know families access many different social media platforms and online interactive platforms. So, we propose to offer more online services to ensure more parents and carers can get the support they need, when they need it and where they need it.

Creating children centre services in the areas of greatest need across Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough has seen a huge increase in housing development, which has created new communities for example Wixams. These new communities as well as areas that have seen extensive new housing don't have a dedicated/purpose built children centre building. We know there is a need for Children Centre services to be accessed in these new communities and we would like to help children centre staff and partners to be able to spend more time and resources in delivering services in the new communities and where they are most needed.

Therefore, we propose there are 7 core Children Centre buildings where communities most need them as well as services being provided in the new communities. We are proposing that there are 7 core children's centres and they are based at the following locations.

Queens Park Neighbourhood Centre, Marlborough Road

Pine Cones, Slade Walk, Clapham Road, Bedford

Peter Pan, Edward Road Bedford

Cherry Trees, Hawkins Road Bedford

Kingsbrook, Canvin Way, Bedford

Daisy Hill, Hillgrounds Road, Kempston

Goldington Children centre, Meadway, Goldington

We propose to deliver other services in the remaining Children centre buildings when required and locations where they are most needed.

Improving activities for families that need extra support

We would like to see more families with young children who need extra able to access children centre services. We would like to increase the capacity of children centre workers and partners to be able to support those families most in need. One way we could do this is by providing more targeted services to vulnerable families and we would like to hear which activities are important to service users and stakeholders. We would still offer universal activities (activities for all) but for families who are able we propose there may be a small cost.

When would the proposed change happen?

After analysing the responses to the Children Centre consultation, if it is decided to go ahead with the proposals set out in this consultation it will be approved by Members in April, then the changes will take place from October 2021.