

Children's Centres Public Consultation – Frequently asked questions.

Will parents be able to drop in to the new centres as they can with the existing centres?

We had planned to allow drop ins at the Hubs sites, however to support the public health initiatives concerning the risk of Covid 19 we plan to have a dedicated telephone number and email address for all initial contacts and aim to do all meetings by appointment or within the family home. We will of course keep this under review.

How will you assess who is the 'most vulnerable'?

We will use the Luton Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) threshold document with the vulnerable and most vulnerable being classed as meeting levels 3 or 4. You can find a copy of this document by going to this web site: www.lutonlscb.org.uk

Our proposed new model will increase the support available to families living in Luton who are most in need of our support.

What will happen to those families that are not considered vulnerable?

We will be developing an online resource for people to self-help and referring people to community-led groups. We will help community and voluntary sector groups to deliver some of the services the council is no longer able to provide.

The first days of a child's life are most key in development - yet you are planning to retract all of this support that parents to be and new parents get. Where else should they get this support if they cannot afford to pay for it privately?

We are not proposing to retract all of this support. The proposal means that our more limited resources need to be focused on families with greater levels of need, so this will mean that most existing services delivered at lower levels of need, levels 1 and 2, as detailed in Luton's current threshold document will no longer be provided by Luton Council staff. We will make resources available online to support families with lower levels of need, and also exploring with community groups, charities and third sector organisations the possibility of alternative delivery models.

Isn't it important to support all families before they get to the point of becoming vulnerable?

The universal services provided by our health colleagues are unaffected by these proposals. The council will continue to work with health and other partner organisations who provide universal services to ensure this support is provided.

The council will end up with more social care costs as families will become more vulnerable due to a lack of these services?

The impact of reduction in service is something carefully considered. When we put proposals together we looked at what could happen long term and the possible impact on statutory services. However, we want your feedback to help us to assess the potential impact of our proposal.

Will health clinics and weighing sessions also be cut?

Services delivered by Public Health and Cambridgeshire Community Services will continue to be delivered and are not directly affected by these proposals. These services may however not be delivered from the same venues in the future.

Have you considered the impact that this is going to have on the current 0 to 5 year olds in the future, particularly considering we live in a deprived area and many of us are unable to provide our children with socialisation, learning opportunities and the confidence that they gain from attending flying start's activities?

Ideally we want to reach every child but our resources are limited. We will look at what services and resources are in the community and help to build these with council support. We plan to develop an online resource centre where families can access information for use in the home with guidance from our staff.

Universal services are already working at capacity and there is often extended waiting times for access to support once thresholds are reached. What risk assessments have been completed around the proposed closure of Luton's children's centres, to ensure no child or parent will suffer a detrimental impact of these proposed closures?

We will finalise our impact assessments and conclusions will be made by looking at data and feedback from this consultation. Some services will be diminished, and we acknowledge that universal services are at capacity. We will be working with community groups to build and develop them to be able to offer some services previously provided in the children's centres.

How will members of the public access the proposed services?

We plan to have a dedicated telephone number and email address for all initial contacts and aim to do all meetings by appointment or within the family home.

Please can you confirm which children's centres you are keeping open?

We will not be maintaining any children's centres in their current format. We are proposing a model based around school clusters, with Central; North; South; East and West Luton neighbourhood teams. These teams will be based in two main hubs to deliver services, with one based in the Leagrave area and another at Manor

Contact Centre Hub. We will also have with two satellite locations at London Road Resource Centre, and Beech Hill Children's Centre.

How will the council help to ensure good mental health of parents if these centres are closed?

Children's centres are only one of a number of services provided in Luton and health services are not affected by these proposals.

How will you ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to participate in the consultation?

We have now arranged five Zoom consultation sessions in the morning, afternoon and evening. Our Flying Start staff have notified children's centre users by email, letter and enclosing a copy of the consultation, telephone and sent a text message. The consultation document is available in the six most common languages spoken in Luton, in addition to English. An easy to read version of the consultation is available for anyone with learning difficulties. Hard copies of the document are available in each of the main children centres and in Luton Central Library. We have publicised the consultation and Zoom events online and through social media in English and in the six other common languages. We have also posted Facebook and Twitter adverts to raise awareness of the consultation targeting adults in Luton aged 18 years and over. In addition we have a translation support service available to support those who may need to respond in another language. Our staff have also offered to support anyone unable to complete the response themselves.

As the council received an inadequate OFSTED outcome for safeguarding, why aren't children's centres and the early intervention strategies they provide being treated as a priority?

In January 2020 an Ofsted inspection rated Luton's Children's Services as 'Inadequate'. As a result a significant programme of improvement aiming to improve services and get Luton to 'Good' has been established. This included immediate investment in areas of the service which needed to be made safe. Due to the need to continue on a programme of improvement, all change and redesign activity must consider the impact on the improvement programme and outcomes for children, particularly in statutory service areas where poor practice was previously identified. These proposals should create services which build the right foundations to ensure children, young people and families who are most vulnerable are protected, resilient and empowered to do more for themselves.

Your consultation for Reimagining Luton town centre states that there is a lack of provision and services for children and families, so why are you not continuing to invest in the children's centres?

To try to minimise the impact of the current financial position, Luton Children's Services are part of a whole council approach working towards Luton 2040. Our 2040 strategy envisions that people, communities and organisations of Luton work together to realise a town built on fairness, providing opportunities for all residents to reach their full potential and achieve a good quality of life; and aspires for Luton to

be a sustainable, resilient and inspiring place, where communities work together to ensure no one lives in poverty. To achieve this strategic vision, it has been recognised that organisational changes are required, to enable the council to best deliver outcomes for residents within the resources available. Thus, the objective is to rapidly restructure the council so it is better placed to deliver good quality services with far less resources. If it does not do this, it will, quite simply, become unsustainable very quickly.

How will the local authority ensure the safety and practice of groups they are going to be signposting to/recommending?

All the services that the Council supports directly through its commissioning and voluntary sector funding are asked to evidence that they meet current safeguarding expectations.

If this is a cost saving exercise as has been said, what is the reasoning behind the children's centres being the victims here and not anything else that the council needs to pay for? Surely the council will end up paying for this somewhere else further down the line? Why is the children's centres been particularly targeted? Has the council looked elsewhere where they can make cost savings?

The legal requirements on the council is for it to have a balanced budget so a savings target of £22million is required for it to be legally compliant. To enable the council to balance the budget there will be significant changes to services, this unfortunately means that we are no longer filling non-essential vacancies. Also, as services are redesigned or end we would be making people redundant. Everything has been scrutinised by the council and it's Executive and the sooner we can respond the more effective we will be. The council has given very careful consideration and we have to look at what we are legally responsible to do and what we can do to support the community to build expertise and support them in providing these services. Our proposal is to still support those who are of greatest needs.

This is not something we want to do, but the financial impact of Covid 19 means that the council does not have enough money to operate as it does currently.

How much will this proposal save the council?

Children's Services have been asked to reduce their budget this year by £3.2million. This proposal if agreed will achieve nearly £1.5m of this overall budget reduction.

Is there any plan to restart the services once the airport starts making money as surely long term the money will become available again?

It is estimated at the moment that it will be at least two to three years before the airport recovers. The financial position is unclear but any income is used by the council for the benefit of people living in Luton.

[Further information about the London Luton Airport loan proposal, funding and council services](#)