

# **Children's Centres redesign consultation**

## **Public Zoom Consultation Questions and Feedback**

### **Consultation Date: 13/08/2020 am session**

#### **Will parents be able to drop in to the new centres (like they can with the existing centres)?**

Pre Covid-19 we had planned to allow drop ins at the Hubs sites, however in this new reality to support the public health initiatives we will plan to have a duty line and inbox 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.

#### **Ofsted are back in a couple of weeks. Following the required improvements that social care got at the beginning of the year - can parents contact Ofsted and let them know their concerns regarding the closures?**

Yes, of course you can contact Ofsted to raise any concerns. The last inspection rated Children Social Care as 'Inadequate' and not 'requires improvement'. This proposal is designed to help the most vulnerable families in Luton and those that need our help the most.

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

We plan to use the LSCB threshold document with the vulnerable and most vulnerable being classed as meeting levels 3 or 4. This proposal will increase the support available to these families. Please see: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

#### **What will happen to those families that are considered borderline vulnerable?**

We propose to develop an online resource for people to self-help and refer people to community led groups.

#### **The first 1000 days of a child's life (from conception) are most key in development - yet you are planning to retract all of this support that parents to be and new parents get - this doesn't make any sense. 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 the possibility of alternative delivery models.

#### **Surely - you will end up with social care costs further down the line as families will become more vulnerable due to a lack of these services - so instead you will need to help them at a later date - when in fact early intervention via the children's centres could have helped. What are your views on this?**

We would dearly like to keep these services, however we have to find savings and the alternative would impact on our statutory services.

#### **Women and families have already been severely let down due to Covid-19 and now you are saying that children will get support when attending nursery school. Some children don't go to nursery until they are two or later. How will you plug that gap?**

Our proposal will continue to support those most in need.

**How would this new system support anxious pregnant ladies in a relaxed and non-invasive way?**

This level of need would not meet the threshold for targeted support. We will however be working closely with community groups to further develop what they are able to offer.

**How will this new system support first time mums (ones who are not “on the radar”) to do the right things for their babies, both with hitting milestones but also with nutrition etc.?**

We would be advising new mums to access our online resources. Colleagues in midwifery and health visiting services will still be able to refer first time mums to children’s services for support, and should their needs meet the criteria for level 3 and level 4 services as described in our threshold document they will still receive support.

**How are you going to help the pressure put on schools and early years settings by ensuring that children are entering Foundation units at a more equal level?**

Our family support workers will work with local community develop community resources that will support families at a universal level.

**There has been a huge development in research and evidence to suggest that early years support plays a huge role in positive outcomes for families who are able to access services that guide, advice and support from ante-natal to 5 years, for example speech and language delay. How do you justify creating an unequal balance to supporting families on a whole as not all families identify as being vulnerable immediately. Vulnerability can arise at any time, at any stage. Do you think this is acceptable from a moral perspective?**

Absolutely recognise evidence, looking at services that are delivered in children’s services, children with additional needs and SEND, and the written plan to improve our SEND service. This new service has already informed that the readiness for school will be a key service, speech and language will remain. We do have a very difficult decision to make.

We have looked at other LA's and other LA's deemed outstanding have models where they support those at most need. Universal services are met by community services supported by LA in the original set up and support with bidding for grants. Other LA's have identified this as working well and have expanded the services more than what was previously offered.

**With reference to 'no-one living in poverty in Luton by 2040', why are you going to stop supporting a relatively inexpensive Flying Start programme which provides an effective number of children's centre activities NOW in 2020, and thus undermining this curiously long term goal?**

Luton 2040 agenda and no-one living in poverty was developed over a period of 18 months and finalised before Covid-19. We didn’t know when the Luton 2040 proposal was made that this significant impact would happen. Absolutely recognise some savings do conflict with this, this is a one year in year saving. We are going to review where we are at when the income from the airport resumes and possibly reverting some of these changes or review and plan how this additional income will support local services.

**I think it would be advantageous to use the Beech Hill Flying Start premises as one of the 2 future family resource hubs. If this was possible, Bury Park families with young children would continue to benefit from the centre's range of 0 to 5 pre-school activities. Do you agree?**

The consultation proposes to retain Beech Hill Flying Start premises. The final proposal on which premises continue to be used will be confirmed following the outcome of the consultations.

**How do the £3.2m cuts for the children's services compare to the other areas of the council? Please can you provide a breakdown of this?**

All areas of the Council are planning to reduce their budgets. Further details can be found on the Council web site.

**What will happen to the staff currently employed in the children's centres and in this section of the council?**

With the savings we need to achieve, it is inevitable that will require redundancies. Once this consultation is finished, we will review proposals, then go to Executive with proposal and once they make decision we will have to act on this. We will enter into consultation with staff and those at risk of redundancy. Council have opened the voluntary redundancy scheme. If Council do go ahead there would be staff consultation and then changes implemented between January and April 2021.

**Based on your research and justification regarding your current provision of activities, what do you anticipate the impact and costs of these changes and cancellation of services will be? Over 1/5/10 years for example?**

We have completed an Integrated Impact Assessment and details of this can be found on the Councils web site.

**How do you intend to identify vulnerable families, safeguard and meet your duty of care for families in Luton? Particularly if they are not already known to you in utilising the few services you propose to remain accessible for 'at-risk' or 'high need' groups.**

Safeguarding board has very clear definition of thresholds (document - see web link below) of what a vulnerable child is and what a vulnerable family is. We are not changing this definition. We work with a large number of partners to help us identify who is vulnerable and in need of our support. <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**What support and financial recompense will you be offering to your 'partner' services to justify offloading your work to them?**

The Council has a statutory duty to provide services to the most vulnerable families in Luton. We will work with our partners and with the voluntary sector to help them provide support for the other families who need it.

**You have already stated that your workers are highly trained and skilled. Given you have a statutory obligation to provide these services how can you expect the needs of parents and children to be met by the voluntary sector who do not offer or specialise in these services?**

We have a statutory duty to provide services and work with the most vulnerable children, young people and their families. The Council has a range of services that is in contact with these vulnerable families and will continue to do so. We work with a large number of partners to help us identify who is in need of our support and who can be supported by other services and organisations.

**How much did the council pay for the Direct Air-Rail Transit (DART)? How can you prioritise those residing elsewhere in the country over your own constituents and residents by investing in the airport and its development?**

The DART will help the development of the Airport. It will support additional use and therefore additional income which will be used to provide services in Luton.

**Why are you only offering meetings via Zoom on one day? If you truly care about gathering views and communicating with those affected please can you open this up to more days and times, and in other languages, to make this available for more families to engage? And what are you offering for those who cannot attend online?**

We have arranged further Zoom consultation sessions in September. Our Flying Start staff have emailed, written, telephoned and sent a text to Children Centre users. The consultation document is available in the six other common languages, in addition to English, spoken in Luton. 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 the 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 used social media to ensure that all Facebook users over the age of 18 in Luton are aware of the consultation. We also have a translation support service available if a consultation response in another language is required.

**Will health clinics and weighing sessions also be cut?**

Anything delivered by Public Health and Cambridge Community Service would continue to be delivered. This may not be delivered from same venue.

**Where on earth am I going to go with him, how am I going to prepare him for preschool and this huge change ahead of him?**

Other Council Services are unaffected by these proposals and we will support the voluntary sector to enhance the services they are offering.

**Who will I talk to about my worries and concerns as I try my best to support him and ensure that this year is a successful one for him?**

We will support the voluntary sector. We will be building services in the community and supporting faith and community groups and develop these services further.

**Please help me understand where parents like myself will go?**

We will continue to support those most in need and support the development of the voluntary and community sector to support other families.

**How will parents without social media know about this and contribute their views?**

Our Flying Start staff have written, telephoned and sent a text to Children Centre users. Hard copies of the document are available at the main Children centres and in the Central Library.

**Why isn't this being more widely communicated?**

We have detailed all that we have done to ensure that everyone is aware of the consultation. If you think that there is anything else we should be doing please let us know.

**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 activities?**

It is important for us to accept that we are in this position as resources are limited. As much as ideally we want to reach every child the resources being limited however within the new services we can offer we will look at what services and resources are in the community and help to build these with the support from the Local Authority. We plan to develop an online resource centre where families can access information for use in the home with guidance from Family Support Worker.

**How will our children and their families who might be on the threshold of being identified as the most vulnerable have their needs met and risks reduced by the proposed closure of our Children's Centres?**

We will be working closely with community groups to further develop what they are able to offer.

**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?**

Conclusion will be made by looking at data and feedback from consultation. There is no guarantee that we will be able to provide a bulletproof service, some services will be diminished and we acknowledge that universal services are at capacity. We will be working with community groups to offer these services.

**How many children were identified as needing support through attending Children's Centre universal activities? For example, how many children are identified as vulnerable in these session? Will children not slip through the net?**

We recognise that all the families that use children centres need and have benefited from the support they provide. We will continue to support families who are the most vulnerable and that need our help. It is important for us to accept that we are in this position as financial resources are limited.

**How will members of the public access the proposed services? Will families be able to walk into the new venues if they needed help?**

We will plan to have a duty line and inbox for all initial contacts and aim to do all meetings by appointment or within the family home.

**Can you confirm which children centres that you are keeping open?**

We are proposing a localities based model aligned with school clusters and the proposed strategic community areas of Central; North; South; East and West, with staff working in an agile way from the agreed community hubs. The teams will be allocated to 2 main hubs for delivery; Leagrave area and Manor Centre Hub, with 2 satellite locations at London Road Centre, and Beech Hill Children's Centre. Each hub will deliver services across designated community areas. We will not be maintaining any Children Centres in their current format.

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

Children Centres are only one of a number of services provided in Luton and Health Services are not affected by these proposals.

**Is the consultation available in other languages and easy read?**

Yes it is available in the six most common languages spoken in Luton, other than English and easy read version is available. Copies are available at the main children centres, in the Central Library. We also have a translation service available via the Children Centres if consultation in another language is required.

**Will you do more sessions for when people return from summer holidays? The short notice timings mean many people are away this consultation week**

Yes further sessions are planned for after the summer holidays on the 7th, 8th and 14th September.

**How will people without social media know about the consultancy? How have you reached them?**

Our Flying Start staff have written, telephoned and sent a text to Children Centre users. Hard copies of the document are available at the main Children centres and in the Central Library.

**With the closure of support for parents and children not in risk groups, how will children and parents access valuable support which I believe prevent these same units being potentially at risk?**

We will continue to support those most in need and support the development of the voluntary and community sector to support other families.

**Will there be any alternative play groups, etc. set up? Socialisation is paramount for both caregivers and their children for health**

We will continue to support the development of the voluntary and community sector to support families.

**Bushmead wasn't specifically mentioned, does that mean the group there is already finished?**

Our current proposals do not include maintaining a Children Centre provision in Bushmead.

**Without antenatal or post baby care such as breastfeeding clinic/cafe etc, how will support look for parents in Luton?**

The services provided by our colleagues in Health etc. are unaffected by these proposals.

**I understand savings have to be made, but is there not an option to consult regarding an increase in price passed on the parents for example £3 per session?**

We do not believe that this would achieve the nearly £1.5m budget saving required from this proposal.

**What other proposals were considered before this one?**

The Council Members considered a number of proposals in order to achieve the circa £23m in year budget saving.

**How many children's centre staff will be affected by the proposed changes? How many full time equivalent jobs will be lost, how many individuals is that likely to be? How many will have to change their place of work?**

I am afraid we cannot answer that question until the public and stakeholder consultation has ended and Council Members agree on the proposed model. This will then form part of the consultation with our staff.

**How will Luton Council ensure that the highly skilled and trained workforce are not lost in the changes?**

The Council policy is to try to re-deploy staff where possible into alternative posts. However, we are afraid that with these levels of budget reductions it is inevitable that there will be redundancies.

**What percentage of registered users is the 200 you have allowed to have a voice?**

We are trying to ensure all Flying Start Children Centre users and anyone else who has an interest in these proposals has a voice. We have detailed already what we are doing but if there are any other suggestions on how we can engage people please let us know.

**As you are closing the customer service centre will there be anywhere to access information?**

We will plan to have a duty line and inbox for all initial contacts and aim to do all meetings by appointment or within the family home. We will also encourage people to access information online.

**As the council received requires improvement OFSTED outcome for safeguarding, aren't children's centres and the early intervention strategies they provide being treated as a priority? Early intervention can prevent costly implications later on.**

In January 2020 an Ofsted ILACs 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 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.

**Why is your Luton 2040 views consultation offering 5 consultations in comparison to the children's centres who only have 2?**

The 2040 consultation is for the whole Council. We are offering 5 consultations Zoom meetings for these Children's Centre proposals and will consider others if there is the demand and they would be useful for the participants.

**One of the three priorities in Luton 2040 is "a child friendly town". Considering that key priority how do you justify removing not only the children's centre services but also the sign posting they provide to other key services. By removing all the children's centre services how do you propose to do this?**

The Council has to realign its budgets otherwise it will become financially unsustainable very quickly. Luton 2040 agenda and no-one living in poverty was developed over a period of 18 months and finalised before Covid-19. We didn't know when the 2040 proposal was made that this significant impact would happen. We absolutely recognise some savings do conflict with this, this is a one year in year saving. We are going to review where we are at when the income from the airport resumes and possibly reverting some of these changes or review and plan how this additional income will support local services.

**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.

**Could you look into Bedford's Sure Start Children's centre budget? The achievements in Bedford on more than half the budget of Luton demonstrates that compromises don't need to impact on local families and closures are not necessary.**

Thank you for identifying this. We are looking at how other local authorities provide services and we will consider your suggestion.

**Why are you doing a lockdown (even if eased) consultation? We understand your pressing need to realign budgets as a result of Covid-19, however consultations using zoom are a relatively new phenomenon. What models of best practice have you used and why was there no simple public engagement to ascertain what times would be accessible to users and stakeholders?**

The Council has to realign its budgets otherwise it will become financially unsustainable very quickly. We are following Government Guidance which continues to advise against large public gatherings. We have arranged 4 Zoom Consultation events and will consider more if there is the demand and it would be useful for the participants. We have detailed what we are doing to ensure people are able to participate in the consultation and if there are any other suggestions we would be happy to consider them.

**The Children's Centres are closed and therefore this means normally when a consultation is done, users can come to the Centres and get help filling it in, this cannot be done now. Covered above under the equalities act the council should provide access to the consultation in other minority languages, where is that provision, how can it be accessed and why has it not been made readily available? Even though it's available in different languages, what happens to those where English is not their first language and need help to complete face to face?**

We have made versions of the consultation document available in the six most common languages, other than English, spoken in Luton. If anyone does not speak any of these seven languages we have made a translation support service available via our Children Centres and staff there will help people to complete the online consultation response.

**Not everyone has access to zoom to attend the workshop and how will parents attend if children are at home? A stable internet connection with sufficient data is still a privilege in the Luton area in addition it's a very lucky parent that can juggle young children, a stable internet connection and still concentrate on a meeting at a set time. In order not to exclude the very people you should be consulting with what other ways can parents access this consultation and contact you personally to make their views and needs clear?**

Our Flying Start staff have emailed, written, telephoned and sent a text to Children Centre users. Hard copies of the document in seven different languages are available at the main Children centres and in the Central Library. There is also an easy to read version of the document for anyone with learning difficulties. Staff in the Flying Start Children Centres are also available to support anyone to complete a consultation response.

**The times you have chosen for the zoom meetings are inconvenient as lunch times and dinner times for many parents. Also why are you only offering zoom meetings on one day?**

We have arranged further Zoom consultation sessions at other times in September.

**The council have said they will be posting the consultation - how many people are they posting to? Will this be sent to all Centre users? If not, then why not?**

We have contacted all Children Centre users and encouraging them to complete the survey online. For those that do not have access to this we have arranged to send them a hard copy of the consultation document.

**Why are you not ensuring that our children's centres continue to provide some activities for young people on site?**

**See notes below from Children's Centre Statutory Guidance Page 6**

**"A children's centre should make available universal and targeted early childhood services either by providing the services at the centre itself or by providing advice and assistance to parents (mothers and fathers) and prospective parents in accessing**



**services provided elsewhere. Local authorities must ensure that children's centres provide some activities for young children on site."**

Under these proposals we will not be maintaining any Children Centres. We are afraid that with the Council's financial position we have a good reason for no longer being able to do so. Like many local authorities who have closed or significantly reduced their Children's Centres we will make available targeted early childhood services by continuing to support and develop services for those families who are vulnerable and for the other families by providing advice and assistance to parents (mothers and fathers) and prospective parents in accessing services provided elsewhere. We will be providing services in a different way.

**A change of use of children's centres could provoke government clawing back the capital costs invested in the centres. Have you calculated the amount of clawback you are expecting to pay?**

**See notes below from Children's Centres Statutory Guidance Page 7**

**"A change of use could provoke Government clawing back the capital costs invested in centres. When local authorities put forward proposals on change of use of capital projects which were funded through the Sure Start and Early Years Capital Grant, they must inform the Department of the proposed changes."**

Thank you for raising this. We are aware of this possibility.

**How can you demonstrate that where you decide to close a children's centre site, the outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected?**

**See guidance below from Children's Centre Statutory Guidance Page 9**

**"not close an existing children's centre site in any reorganisation of provision unless they can demonstrate that, where they decide to close a children's centre site, the outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected and will not compromise the duty to have sufficient children's centres to meet local need."**

We will continue to support those who are most in need of our help.

**Can you say that with this proposal you are not compromising the duty to have enough sufficient children centres to meet local need? See guidance from Children's Centre Statutory Guidance Page 9**

Under these proposals we will not be maintaining any Children Centres

**In your consultation document, you are proposing to stop running all universal services and signposting parents to other community/voluntary sector run services; have you consulted with the people/groups you will be signposting to? Do they know who they are? Do they have capacity?**

We are exploring with partners, community groups, charities and third sector the possibility of alternative delivery models for those families who have a lower level of need.

**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

**Safeguarding issues, if referred to external partners as you need to have trained and qualified staff, who offer early help and preventative support. Will staff in these external partners be trained and qualified?**

We will continue to support those families that are most vulnerable including those where there are safeguarding concerns.

**Many safeguarding concerns and issues are detected during stay and play sessions. How do you propose to detect these issues and provide early intervention without these services prior to children becoming compulsory school age?**

**See guidance below from Children's Centre Statutory Guidance Page 10**

**"Local authorities (or a third party acting on the authority's behalf) should consult everyone who could be affected by the proposed changes, for example, local families, those who use the centres, children's centres staff, advisory board members and service providers. Particular attention should be given to ensuring disadvantaged families and minority groups participate in consultations."**

We continue to receive referrals where there are safeguarding concerns for children of all ages through of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. We work in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations who provide universal and specialist services for children and families of all ages. We have arranged 5 Zoom consultation sessions. Our Flying Start staff have emailed, written, telephoned and sent a text to Children Centre users. The consultation document is available in the six other common languages, in addition to English, spoken in Luton. 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 the 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 used social media to ensure that all Facebook users over the age of 18 in Luton are aware of the consultation. We also have a translation support service available if a consultation response in another language is required.

**By removing universal services where is the wraparound support for vulnerable families? Families need to be able to transition effectively between a targeted service and a universal one. How do you propose to do this without the children's centre services?**

**See guidance below Page 13.**

**"Local authorities should ensure that children's centres offer differentiated support to young children and their families, according to their needs, by**

- **offering access to integrated information and support to all prospective parents, new parents and parents of young children;**
- **encouraging and providing access to early intervention and targeted support, for those young children and their families who experience factors which place them at risk of poor outcomes;**
- **providing inclusive universal services which welcome hard to reach families;"**

We will use the LSCB threshold document with the vulnerable and most vulnerable being classed as meeting levels 3 or 4. Please see: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**How will you reach hard to reach families without the vital children's centre services? See Children's Centre Statutory Guidance above Page 13**

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 the possibility of alternative delivery models.

**Children's Centres use universal activities to bring in many of the families in need of extra support. As families build up confidence and relationships with staff and other service users they often become more receptive to appropriate targeted activities.**

**How do the Local Authority propose to achieve this without open centres? There are many children who will fall under the radar without access to a universal service!**

We would dearly like to keep these services, however we have to find savings and the alternative would impact on our statutory services.

**According to the consultation document a significant amount of Luton delivery sites will be affected by this. As a cohesive local authority it would have been common courtesy to have informed those delivery sites in advance of the documentation being sent out!**

We have proposed a number of sites in Luton to be developed as Family Hubs. However at this stage this is a consultation, as are all the proposals, and no definite decision has been made on the future of any site.

**You discuss a model of support that "encourages families to access and build upon existing family, friends and community networks". Please can you explain the rationale behind this when we already know that Luton has several areas of significant deprivation with families that are isolated? This was why in Luton children centres were invested in, to reach the hard to reach families, build relationships and support parenting and safeguarding. Has this situation changed in Luton?**

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.

**You talk about working with 'partners' within the community. With acknowledged pressure on budgets and workloads across schools in Luton and other services, will you be taking out Service Level Agreements (SLA) with settings to facilitate this?**

Yes we will. As a Council we are closely considering how all the financial support we offer contributes to our Corporate objectives within a significantly reduced budget.

**You say "we will be exploring opportunities to ensure buildings continue to be used to support children, young people and families", in the spirit of transparency please elaborate on this statement?**

If these proposals are agreed we will carefully consider the future use of any building that we vacate. We would hope that they continue to support children, young people and families but that services would be provided by other organisations.

**By ending universal services the wrap around support for vulnerable children in Luton cases to exist. These services are referred to by social workers, Early Help, schools, nurseries, health services and many more. How has the Local Authority assessed the impact of this on vulnerable children and families?**

We have drafted an Integrated Impact Assessment based on the current proposals. However once the consultation has ended and decisions has been made on the proposals this assessment will be publically available as part of the Council's committee reports and details of these be found on the Council's web site.

## **Consultation Date: 13/08/2020 1pm session**

### **How can families be reached if we don't know there is a problem?**

We continue to receive referrals through our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and this will continue. We will also be developing an online resource for people to self-help and referring people to community led groups.

### **How do the council aim to support universal services for families that address low level issues such as nutrition and behaviour. This would be usually picked up through groups etc.**

Universal Health Services are unaffected by these proposals.

### **How can you ensure sufficient "reach out" occurs with families and parents who need support but do not feel their issues are "critical"? I.e. those who would otherwise attend drop-ins for the casual but massively be beneficial reassurance and meet other parents/families? How do you mitigate the stigma to ask for help if the services are formalised? Putting a lot of onus on the parents on self-diagnosing and reaching out. If you are new to the area or not part of groups you will get left behind, they will be invisible until they are diagnosed with something or difficulties with family. How can you mitigate the onuses falling on parent? How can you mitigate the stigma?**

Wish we could say this is not a risk and no-one will be left behind. Looking at services and looking at values. Diversity of workforce, families and will strongly encourage workers to create diverse groups, be in contact with community leaders who can refer. Create a service which will not be exclusive to certain groups. We will rely on the world heading towards self-help and researching information virtually.

### **Are you concerned about parents' mental health if they cannot socialise as described above?**

Children Centres are only one of a number of services provided in Luton and Health Services are not affected by these proposals.

### **From the participants on this call there is about a 50/50 split between concerned service users and council representatives. Many residents cannot read English and need the CC help to complete forms etc, so this is a very limited representation of questions. Should this be delayed and revisited when Covid-19 issues have eased so you can get a true representation? Similar was just postponed in Cambridge as with Covid-19 this is unfair representation.**

Lots of service user and families where English not first language or lack of IT. For these service users with email will get email, mobile number get text, where not email or phone will get written to and will get support from staff. Documentation is being translated. Savings we have to make within this budget so time factor that we have to achieve these.

### **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 requirements that a LA has to have a balanced budget so the savings target of £22 million is required of LA to be legally compliant. Across all parts of council as a whole there will be significant changes, some of which will be big changes to service, some are vacant roles and changes in provisions. Nothing not been scrutinised, Council and full executive have scrutinised all options. The sooner we can respond is most effective, the council has given very careful consideration, we need to look at what we are legally responsible to do and what means can we support community and build expertise in the community and support them in providing these services. Proposals on table is that we are still giving an

offer to those of greatest needs, this is not something we want to do, it is on basis of not having enough money that we have to have these difficult conversations.

**Have other services also been considered to be cut or is it just Children's Centres? How was that decision reached?**

A range of options have been considered in order to reduce the budget and to ensure that the Council is financially sustainable. This will affect services and staff at all levels in the Council. The final decision on proposals is made by the Council Members.

**Have you considered the long term impact of cutting the services?**

We have drafted an Integrated Impact Assessment based on the current proposals. However once the consultation has ended and a decision has been made on the proposals this assessment will be publically available as part of the Council's committee reports and details of these be found on the Council's web site.

**What about vulnerable mothers that these services currently help?**

Family Support Workers currently deliver services will continue to work with families. Family Support Workers will continue to provide intervention and services. This will continue and support will continue through these classes and intervention.

**I fear many families are going to fly under the radar. I suffered massively with Post Natal Depression. I had very limited contact with health care professionals and was easily able to hide my depression. At no point did anyone pick up that I was suffering. Being able to go to an informal group literally saved my life. Under your proposals I would have been missed out. There's many women like myself. What about them?**

Universal Health Services are unaffected by these proposals. Children's Centres are not the only organisation able to support women with these particular difficulties.

**It sounds like you are saying you will rely on others running groups and making referrals? However apart from schools every other charity has financial constraints due to the pandemic and may not be able to pick the need left behind by the Flying Start groups stopping. They also don't have the expertise that Flying Start have.**

Faith groups are just one part of community. Having conversations with other groups that can step in and take responsibility to organise things with support from us. We aim to continue to build and develop our community groups. Cannot provide list of all groups, will have to come back with list.

**Is there any evidence that 'virtual spaces' are effective, and as effective, as face-to-face contact? Would be interested to know what research has been done?**

We are operating with current data available and making proposal. We will review as new reality is embedded and look at data and have flexibility to adapt and if have to come back to have consultation and look at evidence, and look at what evidence and facts are saying. We are working in a positive way using data available. Don't have data on service that has been tested, will review and decide how to progress and send on.

**There must be other data from other counties/centres and see what has worked well. If this has been undertaken would it not make sense to not make the same mistakes?**

If you have any feedback for us, we will welcome feedback and support from yourself.

**May I clarify something Mr Hussain said earlier with regards to costs? He mentioned a saving of 1.5 million but the consultation documents state 3.2 million - was he referring to something different or have I misheard?**

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

**Is it true that the 22M of revenue budget cuts you are making are caused by the decision to loan your airport company a further 83M over the next two years to help them pay interest on the money you have already loaned it? Why are you doing this and why should our most vulnerable families go without when you have the money but choose to lend it out instead of using it for the children of Luton?**

The requirements that a LA has to have a balanced budget so the savings target of £22 million is required of LA to be legally compliant. The LA has to set a balanced budget otherwise it will be financially unsustainable.

**Where will mothers be able to attend antenatal classes instead of bump to babe - if they cannot afford National Childbirth Trust (NCT) for example?**

In terms of classes we have reviewed what services are delivered through flying start Children's centres. In terms of antenatal classes, our Family Support Workers will have skills to deliver this, but only for those that require targeted intervention. There will be online resources and self-help guides. We do have consultation line where Family Support Workers can use interpreting services to convey messages in native tongue, aim to work with resources we have to reach those that require the information. This is the potential services that local community groups could offer moving forward.

**Will you make your other proposals you considered public?**

Any decisions on options and proposals are made to the Council Members. Any decisions that are in the public domain will be available on the Council web site.

**The proposal only addresses immediate cuts. What commitments to rebuilding/re-expanding services will be made? When will the final chosen proposal be re-evaluated once in place and running? How can you measure long term impacts when the largest risk will be those who are overlooked/do not come forward?**

The financial position in the Country as well as in Luton is unclear so it is not possible to make any definite plans at this stage. The Council uses any income for the benefit of the people living in Luton and to meet our statutory obligations.

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

It is estimated at the moment that it will be at least 2-3 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.

**Will you be cancelling public activities (such as the carnival and what not) to cost save?**

A number of different options are being considered across the Council to save money and to meet our legal obligations.

**Were there any plans to cut these services (or part of) prior to Covid-19?**

No there was not.

**Can I ask the logic in the timings of these meetings? I'm sure most families would agree that 1pm/6:30pm are the worst times of days when dealing with children. Surely by holding meetings at these times you will be making it difficult for families to join in? How were people made aware? I found out by social media.**

Flying start children's centre staff were making contact with every parent they were involved with. We have added 3 further meetings. With regards to time we have tried to spread them out for day time and evening. Because a lot of people commented one during day when children at school so organised some when children back at school. If got feedback on times that would be better we will listen. These meetings are one part of the process, able to fill in feedback online.

**Do you know how many times the average woman sees someone face to face at the moment (like a midwife/health visitor etc)?**

Universal Health Services are unaffected by these proposals. These services will continue albeit in a different location.

**As per the last part of comment above, have you considered the long term impact? I.e. social problems as outlined**

We have drafted an Integrated Impact Assessment based on the current proposals. However once the consultation has ended and a decision has been made on the proposals this assessment will be publically available as part of the Council's committee reports and details of these can be found on the Council's web site.

**How will you reach and work with those who do not currently connect to children's centres as they are, who won't be able to access virtual spaces?**

Working with improvement workers, done some embedding with community groups, working with their model, and will provide one off grants. If proposal does progress will explore in more details. Throughout Covid-19 Flying start have maintained communication with all families utilising service before Covid-19, this is the sort of model using moving forward. By virtual not just online also by telephone.

**It's been mentioned a lot about working with partners who will pick up on things. Who are these partners and do they have the necessary resources to pick up on the extra needs?**

Partner is anyone with an ongoing presence in the community.

**How often do these professionals have contact with vulnerable families and what about the families who are not yet known to professionals?**

We have a statutory duty to provide services and work with vulnerable children, young people and their families. The Council has a range of services that is in contact with vulnerable families. We work with a large number of partners to help us identify who is vulnerable and needs our support.

**So once the airport starts making money again, will services be returned to current level?**

Once the Airport recovers the Council will use any income to reinvest in services for the people of Luton.

**What will the council be doing differently in future to ensure that cuts like this don't have to happen again should something have to happen to the airport income again?**

The impact of Coronavirus was unexpected, by not only Luton Council and Luton Airport but also by every public body and Government Department. It is unlikely that any financial planning would have mitigated the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

**Consultation Date: 13/08/2020 1pm session**

**Will the recording be made publicly available? I know a lot of people would love to be here but can't due to childcare issues etc.**

We are not able to make the recording of sessions publicly available due to data protection concerns. We have organised other consultation sessions in September and if people would like to suggest when any other sessions would be useful we are happy to consider this.

**Are there other meetings like this planned?**

Yes on the 7th September 2-4pm and the 8th September 6.30-8.30pm and 14th September 10.00-11.30am.

**What times are then subsequent meetings? Could they be at a range of times to suit a range of people and families?**

Yes other meetings are planned for September and will be publicised

**What about the recording of this meeting?**

We are not able to make the recording of sessions publicly available due to data protection concerns. We are going to produce a Q&A document that responds to all questions submitted through these meetings.

**What are you using as the definition of "vulnerable" please?**

Safeguarding board has very clear definition of threshold document of what a vulnerable child is and what a vulnerable family is. Not changing this definition. The discussions today are around universal services. <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**What plans do you have to identify these vulnerable children and families? I'm concerned that without the children's centres, it would be more difficult to get in contact with these families. Thank you**

Identifying and supporting the most vulnerable is very important. Will need support from partner agencies and community services. Core value will be working closely with communities to identify early the families that need support and intervention.

**All new mothers find themselves in a vulnerable position - how do you define this and where will support be on offer?**

We will continue to support those who are most in need of our help.

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

The services provided by our colleagues in Health etc. are unaffected by these proposals. The Council will continue to work with partner organisations who provide universal services to ensure this support is provided.

**Why are savings being made from children's services when there are current consultations out for redesign on Luton and a vision for 2040? How do we achieve these if taking these services away?**

Children's services is the number one priority for the council. The information you said about the football stadium is being designed and paid for by the football club the council is not contributing to it. In terms of the town centre we still have to think about the future of the town and the future of the people of Luton. There is nothing else where the council is spending money that we can say is not needed to use this for children's centres.

**My question is Children's centre play an outstanding role in early intervention and prevention and without children's centres involvement outcomes won't be great for our vulnerable families and children.**

We all agree that they have done valuable work for the community no-one is disputing that. What this proposal does is suggest a new way of delivering services.

**Will the Manor Centre which is designed for supervised contact be able to manage the other services proposed to offer from there as well?**

If the proposals are agreed we will consider how to develop the Manor Centre and any other buildings.



**What is defined as vulnerable? I ask as first time mum who has used the group's/cafes etc since my daughter was born 2 years ago for not only socialisation but also support/advice for example with breastfeeding (I did not have anyone else to ask within my circle) . How will non risk parents access similar services without the huge cost associated with private classes. These services are essential in my opinion as each parent and child was there for the same reasons, therefore all groups we frequented were friendly and welcoming and most importantly local to each area and therefore walkable for example post c section/or high risk health wise in my case I was not able to drive?**

We will use the LSCB threshold document with most vulnerable being classed as meeting levels 3 or 4. Please see: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**It is a proven fact that many children arrive at schools in Luton well below their peers within other authorities but over recent years this has declined. This is mainly down to Flying Start intervention. The have taught parents through 1:1 advice, their classes and baby groups - they are accessing children who are not vulnerable or in need of safeguarding, their parents just simply don't know what they need to be doing to stimulate and educate their children. How will you stop our schools from struggling and falling behind others when children arrive at much lower levels?**

We did consider this when we put proposal together looking at how we can reach as many children as possible. We want to work together to lower the risk and reduce the negative impact.

**How does the number of 'vulnerable families' in Luton compare to other areas of country? Are we average, higher?**

Luton has a higher than average number of vulnerable families. This proposal will allow us to focus resources on them.

**What will you be doing/what early intervention will be put into place to support families so that they do not end up falling into the 'vulnerable' category?**

We will continue to provide early help services at level 3 of the LSCB threshold document. These are families that do not meet the threshold for statutory social work support. Please see: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**How will you get into the communities to reach these potentially vulnerable children? Who will do that job? Often vulnerable families are very insular but children's centres aren't intimidating places**

We will continue to provide services for the most vulnerable and those that need our help the most.

**Will you be building in extra capacity for social workers? I fear these decisions are going to increase their workloads significantly and put our young people at more risk?**

We would dearly like to keep these services, however we have to find savings and the alternative would impact on our statutory services.

**Schools will be stretched, do they know this?**

We will continue to work in partnership with schools and by basing our services in neighbourhoods this should help to develop our working relationship with schools even further.

**Who is the 'community' and 'community groups' you refer to in terms of offering new provision and identifying need and vulnerability/safeguarding concerns? Currently the flying start groups ARE the groups and community where families can meet and receive help. It seems unrealistic to think these can be replaced without investment.**

The Council works with a range of voluntary sector and community groups and contribute to the local offer. We will look at different ways to develop this further.

**Can you please name which services will continue and which will stop?**

The consultation document details the proposals. You can find this on the Council's web site: [engage.luton.gov.uk](http://engage.luton.gov.uk).

**Have you taken into consideration the joint strategic needs assessments in Luton when you have been planning the redesign? I'm particularly concerned about maternal mental health and child wellbeing**

Children Centres are only one of a number of services provided in Luton and universal Health Services are not affected by these proposals.

**Is there a detailed breakdown of where these costs are being saved? It surely can't just be down to staffing? As mentioned, these amazing staff get paid very little for what they do. Are we talking about the cost/hire of the venues? The resources? There will surely be ways around these savings. Grouping classes/interventions together would help here, e.g. Take 5cafe /breast feeding cafe**

There will of course be budget savings by reducing the number of buildings we use but the majority of costs for the Council are staffing costs. If this proposal is approved the majority of the saving will be from a reduced number of staff.

**We want to offer evidence based services. Is there evidence that the current services are not effective?**

We would dearly like to keep these services, however we have to find savings and the alternative would impact on our statutory services.

**Without these early intervention and prevention services the social care system will become overloaded and inevitably it will fail children. Surely it will cost more to pick up the pieces - it seems a short sighted response. How can that be justified?**

Impact of reduction in service is something carefully considered. When put proposal together looked at what could happen long term, and our ability to reach out. Looking at how they will impact on statutory services. We want your feedback and include this in our proposals and to bring the evidence to what we think the impact will be based on other LA around us, similar scenarios that produce data for us to review. Our top priority is whatever decision we have to take will have as minimal disruption to the future.

**Which LA are you referring to?**

We are considering the response of a number of other Local Authorities in designing our future delivery model. Particularly those that have been rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED.

**How much money are you offering when you are recommissioning these services?**

This decision have not yet been made. However, as a Council we are closely considering how all the financial support we offer contributes to our Corporate objectives.

**Have any of these 3rd sector agencies already come forward to partner with LBC?**

We already work with a number of 3rd Sector organisations that we will help to develop their services further. We have also been approached by others since the consultation has started who wish to offer their support.

**How does the local authority you are speaking with compare in terms of the number of vulnerable children, population, diversity of town?**

We are looking at local authorities that have a similar demography to Luton.

**Given the funding for these services will continue until the end of March 2021 and the funding situation might improve, why are you so quick to cut these essential services?**

The financial savings are required from the 31st March 2021. We are not proposing any changes to the Flying Start Children Centres service delivery before then

**What will happen to the children's centre buildings if the services cease?**

The buildings are part of the Corporate property portfolio and decisions will be made on each individual building once any proposals are agreed.

**Will there be a review date of allocated funds in response to the airport profits? If so, when is the date and/or time frame?**

It is anticipated that it will take 3-4 years for the airport to recover. However this will depend on Government Policy and the impact of Covid-19.

**How do your proposals support the Luton 2040 - no families in poverty pledge?**

We will continue to support families who are the most vulnerable and that need our help. It is important for us to accept that we are in this position as resources are limited. Luton 2040 agenda and no-one living in poverty was developed over period of 18 months and finalised before Covid-19. We didn't know when proposal was made that this significant impact would happen. Absolutely recognise some savings do conflict with this, this is a one year in year saving. We are going to review where we are at when the income from the airport resumes and possibly reverting some of these changes or review and plan how this additional income will support local services.

**How would people access information online?**

We will plan to have a duty line and inbox for all initial contacts. We will be able to refer people to key sites on line where they can access information. The Luton Council web sites already provides a range of information.

**There will be more vulnerability! Our Health Visitors are already under so much pressure, will they have extra support (financially and/or staffing) to help recognise/refer for early interventions?**

Universal Health Services are unaffected by these proposals.

**Will they have to be already identified as vulnerable to access these community hubs?**

We will use the LSCB threshold document with most vulnerable being classed as meeting levels 3 or 4. Please see: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/public/threshold-framework/>

**Will parents or members of the community be invited to these council meetings?**

Please see the Council web site for details of all Council meetings open to the Public and how you can access them.

**Can I also say that from the way you are talking this has to happen, the decision has already been made. This is very disappointing as a user of this service. If it will continue as just said then why hasn't this been explored already?**

These are proposals at this stage and no decisions have been made. We would encourage everyone to complete a response to the consultation proposals. Details can be found on [engage.luton.gov.uk](http://engage.luton.gov.uk)

**Is this just a box ticking exercise?**

No they definitely are not. These are proposals at this stage and no decisions have been made.

**Has the consultation team undertaken an assessment under the equality act?**

We have drafted an Integrated Impact Assessment based on the current proposals. However once the consultation has ended and a decision has been made on the proposals this assessment will be publically available as part of the Council's committee reports and details of these be found on the Council's web site.

**Will the Council consider a review date depending on the progress of the airport?**

It is anticipated that it will take 3-4 years for the airport to recover.

**I would really like to know how much money is available for children's services - we know how much is needing to be cut, but when you talk about some of flying start's services being recommissioned, what is the amount of money is available for this recommissioning process?**

For financial reasons it is not our proposal is not to recommission Children Centres and the service as it is currently provided.

**How do you see the cuts in relation to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for the area?**

These proposals will undoubtedly have an impact on any needs assessment. It is important to recognise that these proposals are only being made because of the financial situation in the Council due to the impact of CV19.

**We don't need to hypothesize if this has been done in other LAs - are you looking at the impact that these cuts have had in other places across the UK?**

We are working with other Councils who are making similar proposals and also those that have already done so. This includes Local Authorities that have made similar changes and are rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED.

**Has the airport community fund been approached to try to save children's services?**

The Council has looked at all its sources of income in order to try to minimise the impact of Covid-19.

**Luton has been rated as inadequate for social care by OFSTED.**

Yes you are correct

**With the new sites that you are looking at, are they able to be accessed easily by all families in Luton or is it going to be a postcode lottery?**

We are proposing a localities based model aligned with school clusters and the proposed strategic community areas of Central; North; South; East and West, with staff working in an agile way from the agreed community hubs. The teams will be allocated to 2 main hubs for delivery; Leagrave area and Manor Centre Hub, with 2 satellite locations at London Road Centre, and Beech Hill Children's Centre. Each hub will deliver services across designated community areas.

**Surely there are other services that are less important? Not to belittle any of the other services provided, but the children are EVERYTHING! I'd rather my children and those from other families get the start in life they deserve than have the grass cut in the local area etc or other services that aren't life changing. Why aren't the children's services statutory? What is more important than children?**

I am afraid that Flying Start Children Centres and Early Help Services are not a Statutory Service. The Council are looking at all the Services we provide in order to make the necessary budget savings.

**When are the local elections?**

The next full Council elections in Luton are scheduled for 2023. They take place every 4 years and the last elections were in 2019.

**Can you please clarify the email address we should use for further questions? The email we used to register for this call?**

[PeopleDirectorateSupportUnit@luton.gov.uk](mailto:PeopleDirectorateSupportUnit@luton.gov.uk)

**How do you plan to assess and research vulnerable children and families in an assumed isolated environment such as their homes?**

We all have our own anxieties around pandemic and virus. Our practitioners will follow government guidelines in regards to safe interaction with the public. We will rely on our partner agencies to identify those vulnerable families. We will also have an open line for people to call in and reach out to us. Our practitioners will be equipped with the necessary tools and with the knowledge to engage with families in vulnerable scenarios. If we assess and deem the family home is not the safest place to have these conversations then we will come with a plan on where we can have the conversations in a safe environment.

**So you were saying that the idea in the future that there will be virtual spaces and also that the practitioners will be able to go to the parents homes. One of the most wonderful things about the Children's centre's is that you get to meet other parents which I think it is particularly important in the early days of having children because it can be very lonely and very daunting also socialising we know is such an important part of babies development so if we aren't going to be able to drop into the centre's and the practitioners will be going to people's own homes how do we replace that socialisation that children might now miss out on?**

Need to look at what community spaces there are and how we can identify those community spaces going forward so if the buildings that are traditionally used aren't available then what community assets are available and how can we help groups to identify those spaces to be able to safely meet as you say to gain that support just by having a coffee together. This is something we can identify going forward and support groups to build that opportunity themselves.

**If drop-ins are not happening anymore and it is all online and we are having enough issues with this consultation and being able to reach everyone so if that then becomes the norm for all the support, how many families are not going to be able to access that support anymore?**

As we are in consultation phase this is the thinking space we will listen to your suggestions and we will have to balance and consider what's best to have a wider reach to children and families. The reality of here and now is that the pandemic is affecting everyone and it is not always safe to have these spaces where people can just drop in. This is not to say that the future will not change once the research bring up a vaccine or we are progressing into a space where people will be in a safe position to interact this is not to say our proposal for family hubs will not have that option for people to drop in.

**How do you reach those families that are not coming forward?**

This is a vital way of how the future will look like in terms of building those close working relationships with community groups, schools, faith groups, health partners and whoever interacts with a child or family. As we know it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard a child, whenever we have a professional interact with a child and there is indication of a need or additional support required, it will also be the responsibility of that professional to reach out to us, to link with us and to work with us to have a wider reach in Luton.

**Who is going to interact with the child regularly before they reach the compulsory school age in reality children's centres are a venue where professionals can react and regularly spend time with a family?**

Interaction will be through professionals mentioned before, health colleagues, community leader and our Family Support Workers. They will interact with them families if they are in that framework or vulnerable families. For the universal services professionals will be involved with the family and they will have that responsibility of identifying if there is a need for targeted intervention and share that information with us. We will then take the lead and provide that intervention.

**Realistically, many families will not come into contact with any professionals beyond 6 months old if they are not deemed at risk so it feels unrealistic to believe that issues will be picked up by others. My daughter is 2 and a half and we have had no intervention since she was about 2 months old.**

Our Family Support Workers will build on capacity in the community by sharing their knowledge and skills. We have gained lots of experience from the training that we have invested in for the staff and we aim to share this knowledge with the community.

**Consultation Date: 13/08/2020 6.30pm session**

**This is not new, people have been trying to close this service for years. I have filled out consultation papers before to save the children's centres, so this isn't new because of Covid-19 so don't think this is fair to say.**

The council set a budget in February before the Covid19 outbreak for this financial year and it didn't involve any cuts to flying start. This emergency budget is from the effect of Covid-19. The proposal we have put on for consultation is to answer the requirement of the emergency budget and the impact on our finances due to the impact of Covid-19 and our income from the airport.

**Why are we going to the extreme and taking all the services away for the drop-ins and I think we have gone to the extreme?**

It is not about taking away, there will be a shrinkage of services. But it is not correct to say that all services will be taken away as the services that are done by Public Health will continue, even if this is from a different venue. Services that Family Support Workers were previously offering e.g. stay and play, baby massage and services documented in the consultation document those we won't have the money to deliver anymore. Interventions will be more targeted and planned and will make sure any intervention and groups will be based on research. We want to deliver services that are backed by research identifying the impact they have. We have had to plan what will be delivered to ensure that the families that most need intervention are not left unsafeguarded.

**What risk assessments have been done regarding the families that don't hit the thresholds as you well know there are at times when referrals are made and thresholds are not met now? I would like to know what Risk assessment has been to ensure that there is not a detrimental impact to these families when the centres close?**

We will not change the way we safeguard children and we will not change the way we work with the threshold document.

**This will effect waiting times and could cause for Luton to have some serious case reviews**

We will revisit waiting times within this consultation. The feedback from this consultation will form the risk assessment, nothing is set in stone. Together with data from Flying Start on

services provided and the feedback we will come up with a proposal and present this to the counsellors and to the public. This will then be our risk assessment.

### **Consultation Date: 07/09/2020 2.00pm session**

#### **Is there no way that some universal services could be kept open? Could the public pay to attend? Pay more? All new mothers are in need of this service.**

We did speak about talking with other councils about changes, and what they did about universal services. Want to explore with local partners and charitable groups to see if they could continue to keep some universal services.

#### **If we could keep a North, South, East, West hub, even with slightly less on offer, I think that would be beneficial.**

Plan is to have 2 hubs and each hub having second delivery venue. Aiming for geographical spread. Practitioners will also go into community and reach out or go to the home.

#### **How much will staff views count as they are the ones who know which services have the most impact on families?**

Staff have the opportunity to send a written response as part of this consultation. The staff affected will also be consulted separately on any proposals following the conclusion of the public and stakeholder consultation.

#### **Could it happen in a more gradual process to lessen the impact?**

The financial impact on the Council means that in year savings are required but these proposals if agreed would be effective from June 2021.

#### **How many staff are due to lose their jobs as part of this process?**

We have looked at all the people involved, we have a rough estimate, the final figure is not defined. Roughly reduction of 80 people.

#### **So how many people will retain their job?**

107

#### **What is in place to ensure universal services continue (possibly as part of community groups)?**

We are still working on this and mapping what is there in local community. Exploring different groups that can step up and work in partnership with us to gain capacity.

#### **Seems like decision has been made, already closed children centre and put forward Integrated Plans. Have there been a lot of people who think this is a good change? This is happening to tick off you went out to consult.**

Not a final decision, no Children's Centres have closed, in terms of not reopening at the moment. They are closed for face to face delivery at the moment due to Covid-19, but the centre is running virtually. No formal closure so far, legally have to consult on proposals to close Children's Centres. From Consultation documents, there will be a venue in Leagrave Hub. Public consultation on until 20/9/20. Then report to summarise everything and all questions. Go to Policy group in October 2020, to make decision if go ahead with proposal.

#### **Services haven't resumed as were, people who have picked up services online, most vulnerable haven't been able to navigate this, highly doubtful they are using this service.**

Full range of services are not being delivered due to Covid-19. Recovery plan to potentially reopen facilities for face to face, but due to social distancing would only be 2-3 parents max

due to venues. We don't rely on vulnerable families to make contact, we have contacted them.

**If response is negative, will you consider keeping Children's Centres open?**

Council Members will decide on any proposals following the outcome of the Consultation.

**Support giving them, that was what the Children's Centres represented, parents living in multi-generational households, cannot let children play or going through mild symptoms of depression, or struggling with pregnancy. Have these places to go, some day we will recover from Covid-19. Pubs, restaurants and take aways open, but sceptical to open children centres? Even though death rate is nearly zero, in terms of stats in good place with Covid-19.**

Isn't quite correct to say we are in a good place, Luton is still an area of concern. Still in top 20 in country. Lots of data we take into account when making decisions to open facilities. In schools they are still operating bubbles and social distancing, and if a positive test amongst that bubble the whole bubble isolates. Plan in place to reopen and recover, council being cautious with good reason. Regularly under review. Staff have regular contact with families. Will return to services if not increasing risk of positive tests. No decision made to not reopen due to consultation.

**On Facebook page for Flying Start Luton, published what opening and where?**

No mention of integrated services, this is a starting point

**Publish plans and when?**

Under weekly review, cannot say at end of month will open everything. For every person who tests positive risk passing onto someone vulnerable.

**Shouldn't have opened schools**

Government made this decision, LA cannot change this decision. There are some schools where they have to isolate already due to positive tests.

**People are still engaging in lives, nearly back to normal, if someone's ill and isolate whole year, cannot track and manage.**

This decision made by Central Government not Luton Council.

**Why consulting on something that is wrong, we all know that these services are needed for the residents of Luton. How long would it take to put in place?**

If proposal goes ahead, the earliest new service in place is May 2021. This closes in 2 weeks, then we have staff consultation. Decision at policy group, if agreed will go ahead. Already had discussions with Public Health and Early Years Alliance.

**Don't you think it is the council's responsibility to provide these services?**

Legally don't have to provide universal services, only thing legally have to provide is done through Public Health.

**If cuts are based on loss of income, if income goes back to normal, does decision making have clause that reopen these centres as a priority?**

Should income recover, then the elected members make decision where this money is spent. Elected members make these decisions. Cllr Hussain has been clear how he values Children's Centres. Need to be petitioning elected members and MP's about your views. Cllr Hussain - Myself, leader of council and colleagues made decisions the Children's Centres are top priority, part of 2040 plans, they are one of the targets, if the income does recover, this will be number 1 priority.



**Consultation Date: 08/09/2020**

**Have the council consulted with the 3rd sector organisations - do they have capacity? National Lottery funding is finite and there is a real pressure on these charities at this time**

We are open to exploring these possibilities, this will be done once decision has been made. Will consult with stakeholders at Flying Start board meeting. Not about capacity now, it is about helping them gain more capacity.

**Please could you explain what will happen the buildings you would no longer be using?**

Depends on building, some are located on schools. We are entering discussions with schools if they want to take on this space. The focus is on early years and support local community. Some venues we own and some lease long term. Some lease by hour, we would end the lease by hour. The longer leases we would review if needed by community service.

**Schools won't turn down additional space, but very rarely used for early years provisions. How many own/ lease?**

Stopsley Baptist Church, Mall hire by hour. In Q&A doc more detailed answer.

**How much it will cost to close the centres including redundancy, deprecating buildings, releasing, etc?**

Depends if own or lease. Would depend if breaking the lease would incur a charge. Council reviewing all buildings as due to Covid-19 it is shown the workforce can work from home and offer services. Cost of redundancies will be from corporate, council has launched voluntary redundancy scheme.

**By consolidating the services what measures will be in place to ensure that young children and families do not slip through the cracks?**

As we do now we will be relying on our colleagues and professionals from other agencies, colleagues, other groups, neighbours reporting issues.

**Is the saving of £3.2mil one off saving for this year, 2021/22 or is it phased saving for future years?**

This saving of 3.2 million is for this financial year, the impact of loss of income will not be dealt with this year. There will be some that will need to be saved next year. Children's services cannot make any more cuts. As for future years, that is hard to gauge. There has been modelling done on when we think income streams may return. Common consensus is 3-4 years to fully recover.

**To add, the government are pushing the support of 0-5 development, surely this is acting in complete contradiction of that?**

Don't disagree, perfectly logical of potential impact. Ever since council became aware the impact on income streams, have been petitioning Local Government for support. Been planning around how quick income streams from airport to recover. Children services would be high priority when income stream recovers.

**What about the children who fall short of most vulnerable? They will slip into the vulnerable categories due to lack of universal support, thus putting even more pressure on these services!**

Naive to say there isn't a risk, there is a risk if this proposal goes ahead, we have to find a way to make these savings.

**Luton has had some of the highest breastfeeding rates during the pandemic - where will free breastfeeding and peer support be available for families?**

This is a public health priority, and there will be discussions with them. They may decide to arrange something outside of Children's Centres.

**Have we looked into every possible way of running sessions? This session is so easy to follow and listen to, why can't we use online resources, like Zoom to run the sessions that would normally run face-to-face. It could be run by one person and a number of people (more than is even currently available) could join in. I had an online baby massage session with a health worker, it was great. I've been in a large group session where it can be slips off into rooms, a great possibility for a parents group! There are ways that the services can be run but on a much cheaper budget.**

Really good suggestion, a lot of feedback has been people find the online engagement challenging. This is something we can explore and if we can find a way to incorporate this in to any future proposal. Significant reduction in staffing, but this is something we can use to reach a large number of people.

**Can you please remind us of all the partners that you are talking to on Thursday?**

CCG, Public Health, NHS, Local NHS England reps, School reps, Police, EYA, Representatives from former users.

**Please could I address the issue of why breastfeeding is not JUST a public health issue?**

Not just a public health issue, this is the public health priority.

**Are some of service users part of the decision making meetings or can we just voice our concerns during this consultation?**

Just during the consultation, elected members will meet to make recommendations and go to wider group of councillors for decision.

**I would strongly encourage you to talk to Liverpool (who also have such airport concerns) about how they are managing to keep their Children's Centres open?**

Liverpool not owned by council

**How are your Children in care costs at the moment?**

Numbers are lower to local neighbours, placement costs are higher than local neighbours.

**Will this session be given to counsellors?**

Session recorded and transcribed. Will be available to councillors.

**I hope that LBC considers venues with parking and that are on bus routes.**

This is a consideration of ours putting together the proposal. Public transport is important to families using the services and also parking.

**I'm a new mum (second baby), I don't fall into any categories that would class me as vulnerable. However, as a mum with a new baby I know too well how mental health can be affected at this point in parenting. By removing the services that I can access, we will result in more mental health referral, more postnatal depression and more parents stuck inside with no access to any services which will help them build a support network.**

No officer or Councillor Hussain would say there is no impact to these changes. We will be consulting with colleagues in Public Health and discussing how moving forward there are opportunities for these people to receive support. It is inevitable that any reduction in service would have an impact.

**I've spoken to many, many mums who've birthed during the pandemic, with restrictions in place etc. Mental health is a huge issue - Beds, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) are forming a strategy to improve perinatal mental health services and children's centres will be a big part of it - this will be a huge gap in Luton**  
BLMK, CCG are members of the Flying Start Children Board, will make sure pick up this issue. Not all CC are closing and clearly we would need discussion if we are part of programme how we will deliver this in Luton.

**Councillor herself, appreciate need to save money. Don't know which parents who will get depression, or children who will have special needs. What will happen to parents who have a child with special needs who isn't socialised? Very concerned we will have a lot of children who require this additional support. What plans have been put in place and what resources are there for school to be able to manage?**

In public consultation will have particular focus on children with special needs and school readiness, we recognise the focus. How will we know? Not all universal provision will be ending, public health consultation will continue offer support.

**Child minder used children services on daily basis, some of the child minders cannot do these services themselves, really concerned what will happen if these services are not in place?**

Under proposal that would not be there, it would be for the child minder to identify what they can do. Schedule currently released at the moment for services, had trouble reopening for face to face sessions, and cannot run groups due to government guidelines. Need to consider Health and Safety also before running services.

**Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) for under 5's breastfeeding highlighted as priority?**  
Yes

**Bin collections, we could do with collecting that once per month as litter and rubbish on the street is a public health issue. Large number of men on consultation and women on the other side**

Councillors proposed 80 different proposals and considered them all.

**Moth ball the centre's to reopen in a certain amount of time?**

Income stream is an active discussion.

**Consultation Date: 17/09/2020**

**How do these other councils compare in terms of population and child poverty? As Luton does have high child poverty and people don't have the options to go to more expensive playgroup settings**

One of them was smaller, but not as high in deprivation as Luton. The other was a London borough. We will be looking at other councils models during this consultation.

**I think in affluent areas there are more private child focused groups but you see this less in poorer areas**

Yes wouldn't disagree with this. Commercially companies will set up where they can make income.

**How will the council identify families at risk?**

As a children's service we have always believed safeguarding is everyone's business, we will be relying on other professionals who engage with families to share concerns with us through Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

**We're new to the area, and not original from the country, the children centre have been a huge support for us, as we don't have family and friends here. If there is no more Children Centre, how or where else we can reach the community?**

There are groups running in Luton already for diverse community, we would work with them to support them to offer services.

**Could there be an online support group from council with limited stay and play options available?**

This came up in previous meeting about offering support online and groups online. We will be exploring this.

**Will poorer families possibly be excluded by online options?**

Families will be able to use online facilities in other venues such as libraries etc. There are technology solutions we can explore. There will be a reduction of availability for services if this proposal goes forward.

**We don't have any religious background as well, it's won't be easy for us**

Won't be relying on faith groups or communities to run services, as it would be a mixed offer to provide services.