

## **Formal Consultation**

### **New Vision for Early Years Services including Children's Centres in Peterborough**

#### **Comments received and Responses to the Consultation Paper**

**Explanatory Note**

This document sets out a summary of the comments and issues raised at the consultation stage on the draft "New Vision for Early Years Services including Children's Centres in Peterborough"

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Peterborough City Council wishes to thank all those who took the time between November 2013 and January 2014 to complete the response form, to write to us with your thoughts, ideas and concerns and those who attended the public meetings to let us know their views on the proposals.
- 1.2 This annex highlights all those comments/suggestions submitted in response to the consultation. The responses include comments that have been emailed to the children's centre email address as well as comments that have been included in the questionnaire, in response to the final question *"Taking account of the context set out in the consultation paper, if you have any alternative proposals which you would like the council to consider please provide details"*

## General Comments

We need to keep as many centres as possible, however the centres in areas of deprivation are essential. Families who find everyday a struggle will not travel to other centres and we need to focus on pre-school children at the centres, not spread to much into the whole community support system. Despite government initiatives to get young children into nursery at a very young age, research has shown children do best when they have a good early education at home first, and parents need in this.

Super centres should not just be as per suggested location. Without sounding 'snobby' these are undesirable areas and not local enough for access.

I would like to propose to keep all of the children's centres open for the following reasons:

- 1) Every child needs to be able to play with other children outside their own or a friend's home - it prepares them for nursery and pre-school.
- 2) Young parents are vulnerable - they can become lonely and overwhelmed by the responsibility - to be able to have a chat, change of scenery and exchange views is vital to a person's wellbeing
- 3) I believe it's the council's responsibility to provide such good quality communal spaces for everyone to use.
- 4) If you look after your children, you look after your future.
- 5) Closing the centres will undo a lot of good work and progress that has been achieved over the past years since 2006 - how much money will it cost to re-establish them when funding increases again.

Pay the council people less and put that money into the children's centres. As not every parent drives (myself being one) and putting the super hubs where you propose means a lot of people are going to miss out on these services which isn't fair. And with myself being a parent to a child with a disability, public transport or taxis are not an option due to cost and the way my child reacts with these services.

It seems a shame that when the government is pledging funds for "Early Years" the early years centres are being reduced in effectiveness. Where are the funds going?

Please do not take away our children's centres. They are such a valuable, special place giving so much support to families. I come every week and my son really enjoys it. We have come since our son was a baby and at this time I found it a huge help to have somewhere to come and meet new parents and develop our son's skills. Don't take this resource away.

Keep the most popular nurseries such as Caverstede, take into consideration all aspects: people travel from all over Peterborough to attend groups here because of its brilliant service, reputation and staff. If you feel the need to "discontinue" some nurseries, it should be those that do not have a high volume of people attending, these could become the super hubs or outreach and redesignated". There is a great need for services and baby groups and play day needed for the ever growing population!

Forgetting services 0 - 2 years: Attachment/Parenting - Peer support/expert support. - Higher risk of post natal depression for non high risk parents. - Children's social care - more referrals

Children Centres are an advantage to the children and their learning. It also gives an opportunity for parents to meet other parents. It is a good build up for children and being able to organise and understand a nursery/pre-school setting and environment. Children's Centres should remain as they are and not be closed down.

I object to services being removed from any locality. Many vulnerable people can only access their local services "on foot". People who are isolated will become more vulnerable and local groups provide a "lifeline" for these people. Alternative proposals: Make a higher charge for group activities and provide a voucher scheme for those who cannot afford to pay.

I would like to register that the "timetable" re the "proposals" seems to be very hurried and unpublicised. There has been very little explanation of the economics of changing the "centres". There has not been detailed figures showing the cost of centres as they are and the costs of conversion. There only seems to be one proposal to be decided upon. If any other proposals are put forward then they can only be grounded on limited information. If the "cabinet" is deciding on 20th January and the consultation period ends on 8th January then there is very little time for a further public consultation. Is this a "done deal"?

Response to Q3.g) Centre name: Ravensthorpe - New Use/s: As one super hub as it's close to another children's centre but keep the others as they are. Comments at Q4.: Only having one super hub in Peterborough. Too many parents with children like myself on my own as a lone parent need the network and support of the Children's Centres and other parents like me who need to socialise or we would go mad at home day in and day out. Funding (?) two years old is fine if you have a job, not all people with a two year old have jobs. Also what about the under twos? I can't return to work because not enough childcare providers for babies!!!

Only comment in response to Q3.g) Centre name: Ravensthorpe - New Use/s: Its got 2 children centres close to each other

Would rather they stay the same, especially in the rural areas the babies/children will lose out if they shut/go private. Most of us cannot afford to travel to city centres and who will be the family support if this happens? Who's most in need? Those that 'are' in need don't tend to 'come forward' so will not attend these clinics/centres, so will be left out/forgotten. It's the Children's Centres who notice problems and alerts the system for help, generally. This will disappear leaving the average family much more vulnerable.

Would prefer the Centres to stay as they are as easy access for all problems. Also family play is a weekly thing my children enjoy coming to. If this closes access to other facilities are at a distance which will make things harder to attend especially for single parents if no access to a car.

Support services MUST continue to be easily available for all mothers in the Peterborough area. All are vulnerable, regardless of their income. The existing network of children's centres provides this currently - it's going to be incredibly difficult to set this all up again. Once it's gone, it'll be gone forever. Ease of access (many mothers will have had complications in childbirth which will make travelling across town difficult/impossible) is essential. Easy access to breastfeeding support is crucial in the early weeks, as is weaning support once the children reach six months of age. Removing children's centres and their services will lead to increased isolation and rates of post-natal depression in Peterborough mothers. In December 2010 I gave birth to my son, complications at the end of the pregnancy meant that he was born by caesarian section. This led to difficulties with establishing breastfeeding and much reduced mobility for me. My health visitor judged that I was at a high risk of developing post-natal depression, as I had very little social support with my and my husband's families living in the North West, i.e. 170 miles away. So, as an isolated new mum, in pain and immobile, it was a relief to discover that my nearest Children's Centre was based literally five minutes walk away in Stanground (where we lived at the time). I took advantage of every session and group available to me, obtaining huge amounts of help and support through the baby cafe, soothing my, at times fractious, baby with baby massage and meeting other new mums at the Brewster Babes session held at Brewster Avenue for people with children under six months. Although I found life with a newborn incredibly difficult, those groups and centres provided a lifeline for me at this point. Now I hear that Peterborough City Council plans to close most of the children's centres, replacing them with four "super hubs" for the most disadvantaged families. I dread to think how I would have coped during my maternity leave if Stanground and Brewster Avenue Children's Centres didn't exist. I do however; know that my mental health and the health of my child (as I would have had to stop breastfeeding without the support) would have been hugely affected. My immobility (you are unable to drive for at least six weeks following a C-section) means that the proposed hubs would be unreachable for me. I'm not "disadvantaged" in terms of my income (though anybody receiving Statutory Maternity Pay of £136 a week when they have bills to pay can hardly be described as well-off!) but putting any mother at an increased risk of post-natal depression and removing support networks could leave many parents in a severe state. Please, please reconsider this decision for the wellbeing of ALL children and mothers in the city

There should be somewhere to get advice on breastfeeding in a location close to where you live. Not all parents can drive and are less likely to travel to centres which are not local to them. Closing local centres will isolate parents especially first time mums. More should be done to enable mums to attend classes with their babies for example post natal exercise classes and advice on child care. There is no space to do this in the new hospital, so I was told when I needed such a class. Closing children's centres doesn't seem to be consistent with caring for parents of young children and babies. They provide a crucial service to all parents regardless of background.

It is my view that the proposed closures to children's centres should not happen. All across Peterborough there is a need for the levels of support that the children's centres provide. I recall Hampton before the children's centre was in existence and at the time I was a new parent who felt very much alone. I dreamed of the support that a children's centre could give. Our local centre provides a place for new and existing parents to meet, a place to seek support and a location for involved professionals to catch up with each other about children within their care. I use the centre as a child minder and bring my mindees there each week to meet other child minders and their mindees for learning and play opportunities. I have been able to discuss the care of a mindee with her health visitor while at the centre. It provides a local level of support for parents that will disappear if the Super Hubs are created. There is a level of need in our area as there are in all areas of Peterborough but removing the support from this area because another area has a greater need will in the end lead to an imbalance of support and will lead to a growth in the need of support in this area. Not everybody has cars to travel for groups. Please reconsider.

I wish to make the following points:

1. I disagree with the proposal to have services located in 4 super hubs and 3 outreach centres, which with the exception of Orton Hub and Bretton Outreach Centre are all located very near each other in the central and eastern areas of the city. It will be very difficult for families living outside these areas (many, if not most, reliant on public transport) to travel to services in these hubs and outreach centres, and very expensive for the local authority to provide transport for this purpose.
2. These proposals would deprive whole communities of the services currently provided by children's centres; many of these communities have very needy families who may not qualify as targeted families able to access the limited provision in the hubs and outreach centres; and even in apparently affluent communities such as Longthorpe and Netherton there may be families whose needs are camouflaged by their income, lifestyle or type of housing.
3. For the families who do qualify as 'targeted families' the services as proposed will in many cases be outside their local community; as a result they will lose the local contact currently provided in children's centres, they will be mixing with families from across the city with whom they have no other links, local communities will not be strengthened as a result of these proposals, rather the contrary. It will be difficult to encourage families to travel from a distance to one of the proposed super hubs or outreach centres, and therefore there will probably be low take-up and sporadic attendance.
4. The loss of universal services means that families using the services in the super hubs and outreach centres will be easily identified as vulnerable or troubled families, with the ensuing stigma that that might bring. At the moment, Family Support Workers can encourage parents who have poor parenting skills or problems dealing with their child's behaviour to come into groups where they can mix with and learn from more experienced parents, as well as getting advice from Early Years Workers. If the proposed superhubs and outreach centres are only going to deal with troubled families, there will be no good role models for these parents to copy, instead there will be a much more formal relationship with professionals; instead of an exchange of experiences and ideas between parents, as at present, there will be more instruction from professionals, which parents may resent, especially if they feel the professionals do not have personal experience of bringing up children.
5. The proposal to have different agencies working together is an excellent one, but this already happens in the existing Children's Centres and there is plenty of scope for it to expand. Health, adult education, Job Centre and housing are all represented on the Children's Centre Advisory Boards and Children's Centres would welcome more input and involvement from them. There is a very close relationship between health services and the Children's Centres which I fear will be damaged with the loss of local Children's Centre provision.
6. Children's Centre Family Support staff have very full caseloads; they receive a lot of referrals from Health Visitors and work closely with Social Workers and Early Years settings. They do a great deal of work with families where children are subject to CP or CIN, and work with untold numbers of families to prevent things reaching that stage. It's difficult to see, how even with a small increase in numbers (from 43 to 54 by 2015, I believe) Health Visitors could manage without the Children's Centre Family Support Workers, who know their local community and have the opportunity, not just to visit families in their homes but also to observe them within the Children's Centre.
7. Local Children's Centres provide a very cost-effective way of supporting troubled families. If you remove that local support network, and I stress the word 'local', in a few years time, the local authority will be paying for far more

expensive intervention by social services - expensive not simply in purely financial terms, but even more importantly in terms of the damage to children's lives and families.

8. Peterborough has a rising birth rate and increasing numbers of migrant families settling here. Mention has been made of increased Government funding going into early years education, but this is for children aged 2 upwards. The number of 0-2 year olds is also increasing, but there is no provision for these children in the proposed structure, unless they belong to a targeted family. There are many parents in Peterborough who will not meet the criteria for targeted support, but who nevertheless need help and advice with parenting and the opportunity to meet other parents, not just in a social setting (as might be provided by the frequently mentioned 'mums and tots' groups) but with the support of a friendly, impartial professional who can suggest ways in which parents can help their child's development. There are many isolated families in Peterborough who have limited, or no, command of English and Children's Centres provide an ideal way for parents and children to meet and mix with other families who do speak English, to learn English, to integrate into the community and form friendships. The value of this in terms of social cohesion cannot be overestimated and is particularly valuable for under 5s before they start school. 8. While I appreciate that there is a need to save money, I would suggest that more consideration is given to the alternative: raising income. Although funding for Children's Centres has not been ring-fenced, presumably the local authority could, if it wished, allocate more money from the income raised through Council Tax towards maintaining the present Children's Centre structure. I suggest that this would represent a saving in the long term, obviating the need for much more expensive intervention by social work and health professionals in the future. In short, money spent on maintaining Children's Centres today will save money tomorrow and also pay dividends in terms of happier, healthier, more integrated communities. Given Peterborough's poor reputation for safeguarding and educational standards, the local authority should be investing more, not less, in supporting families with under 5s, regardless of where the Government chooses to focus its funding. The proposals as outlined in the consultation paper are short-term measures which will need to be reversed in a few years time, at far greater cost to the local authority. From discussions I have had with other professionals on the ground, I have not come across anyone who thinks differently.

9. If the Council decides, despite widespread opposition in the community, to 're-designate' these six centres and change the way in which the remaining centres operate, then I would urge that consideration is given to staff in the superhubs providing regular services in the areas where there will no longer be any Children's Centre provision: Westwood and Ravensthorpe, West Town, Netherton, Longthorpe, Hampton, Stanground, Woodston, Eye and Thorney and the other villages within the Peterborough Unitary Authority area boundary. I would suggest that this takes the form of one or two days a week where groups are led by Early Years Practitioners, which all families can access and where parents can be helped to acquire good parenting skills, and parents and children can socialise; if space allows, health clinics and other community services could also be provided at the same time.

Since families are living further away from extended families and support, the children centres are of huge importance to people who feel isolated. The issue with closing the centres that are deemed 'not in deprived' areas, fails to acknowledge the usage and need for support for women who may not be deprived but use them as a lifeline. Building the super centres not only will people have to travel further to get to them, but the inability to deal with the number of women and families in the whole of Peterborough. Let alone the time, space, training, facilities etc, it would take to get them up and running quickly but with excellent standards. Losing the proposed children centres will leave a gaping hole where support is necessary and an increase in mental health issues will be the long term cost where savings are trying to be made in the short term. The proposal seems to focus purely from a monetary benefit point of view and seems to be ignoring the huge impact on parents and children's social, psychological and community benefit that the children centres provide.

I don't have an alternative proposal, the children's centres are it, which someone had proposed 10 years ago & actioned. Maybe I can propose a children's centre in 10 years time when the current proposals fail & supporting all community members is thought of as a good idea again

Community asset transfer? With the right support maybe the families could set it up themselves

I feel that the location of the 'super hubs' needs to be drastically re-designed. For families living anywhere west of Bourges Boulevard & North of the A605, there are no day to day, weekly or monthly services within easy access. Many of the families in these areas do not have access to personal transport so will face an untold amount of costs & hassle just to get to a 'super hub'. Although my family is not classified as in need, the Westwood & Ravensthorpe Childrens Centre has been a fountain of assistance both prior to the birth of our child & after it. It has helped my wife get out & socialise with other parents & my son to spend time with other children. Removing the access to this centre will drastically affect her lifestyle as well as my sons development

Keep all child centres open. This consultation is flawed and not consultation. At no point have you stated what my opinion is with regards should this centre close. This "consultation" presumes the centres will close and is biased as a result. This flawed

Look at contracted services in the area and bring them into the centres & charge. Maintain the local centres and put effort into improving take-up rates by addressing the barriers that parents have to using the services. 1. Benefits of the services offered are not understood. 2. When choosing how to spend time with their children, other paid activities are trusted ahead of the free services of the centre. These higher cost services by contracted providers should be brought into the centres 3. There is an apprehension around joining in and fear of being preached too at a centre

If you wish to open up super hubs and out reach centre that's fine but my disagreement is that these centres wont be open to everyone . Why should children miss out on what. Is the only groups available. Around Peterborough. Because you have decided to label people . Only having these hubs open to families. On low income with attach a stigma. To the hubs . I understand some of the centres being closed and being used for pre schools due to a high demand for placement but once again make these hubs or centres open to all families. Please excuse the poor grammar on a smartphone

Leave the children centres alone and stop spending money on crap things like the water fountains in the city centre!!!!!!

I cannot afford to send my son to a nursery. I assume 2 year old funding is available for vulnerable people not for everybody

I use the children's centres to meet up with other mums and attend play groups and development groups with my 6 month old daughter. I fear that these changes will dramatically reduce the resources available to people like me. I understand the proposal and I don't disagree however it's unfair to only focus on providing services to the more deprived and those with special needs when new mums need support too. My concern is that creating superhubs in the most deprived areas will not provide a welcoming environment for newborns and toddlers. Although mums like me may not be high priority we do make up a huge proportion of the people that currently use the centers so where do we go?

Firstly, I am not convinced that the creation of Super Centre Hubs will save costs if taken into account the costs of creating them in the first place and the cost of running them. Also, by closing the local Centres you increase the journey time to the Hubs - increasing car journeys and excluding families with no means of getting there because they have no car or no money for the bus ticket. The Children's Centres provide a very important place for all families, and should be inclusive, for the following reasons: 1. Children who don't attend nursery or childminders have got a chance to play with other children outside their own home or a friend's else's home - it prepares them for nursery or school later on. 2. Families from non-deprived backgrounds also need a place to go for advice and to meet other parents - it benefits the local community because we get to know each other and our children play together. 3. I can only speak for Walton, but there is a lack of good quality playgrounds in the area. Itter Park is ok, but Walton Park Playground is not nice, one swing is broken and there is not much equipment for the size of the park.

Firstly, all new parents / and parent of small children will face some of the same problems / obstacles. For e.g, Breastfeeding difficulties (of which there can be many), A risk of post natal depression, and everyday behaviour and health concerns of their child. THIS IS REGARDLESS OF THEIR CLASS OR FINANCIAL BACKGROUND/CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES!!! To remove the services currently provided for at local children's centres, and replace with "Superhubs" (I imagine a consultant was paid a large amount of money to come up with this concept), is hugely detrimental to our society and smacks of discrimination. Firstly, what will happen to the vast number of women who need support with breastfeeding but don't fall into the "vulnerable"/" Deprived " category? The NHS will not be able to

cope with the influx of visitors to their own hospital based support groups. Peer supporters serve a great role, but there is a huge difference in having someone giving you information and sending you home or being able to sit with other feeding mothers, as they feed, in a welcoming environment with a professional present to advise where needed on a weekly basis. I can state that had it not been for the baby cafe service at my fantastic children's centre (Brewster Avenue) I would have switched to bottle before 3 months, instead I fed exclusively till 6 months, combined till 8 months and night fed till 19 months!!!! Secondly, How comfortable will someone feel accessing these superhubs knowing they are to be accessed only by those who fit the "deprived" status? You may as well stamp it on their foreheads. Never mind the fact that the targeted market would be likely to have problems reaching their superhub. Each community needs realistic access to a children's centre. Post Natal Depression can strike any women, again regardless of social class, financial standing...Having somewhere within the community to visit, to reach out to fellow new parents, share experiences, learn skills and to be able to talk freely about parenting concerns / coping ability without being judged or categorised can dilute the pressure that builds up, and I believe can actually serve as a prevention of post natal depression. And for women who do suffer with PND, as I did, the homely, welcoming and non judgemental feeling of a childrens centre and all it has to offer can be totally invaluable. Again without these resources, where do these women go, how do they cope? Brewster Avenue and Stanground children's centres have been campaigning / brainstorming ways to attract more vulnerable parties into the centres for some time now, you cannot force people to use the facilities if they are not interested. And if they do use the facilities, surely these individuals would benefit for having a broad range of society around them, positive role models, rather than centres utilised only by those from deprived areas /categories. Such a step to exclude other members of society from using the facilities will just create/ increase a class divide. The reality is these "superhubs" will be turning away people that want/need/will benefit from and are prepared to pay for their services, and will probably be unable to attract those that are targeted, or unable to keep them interested. Big expensive empty buildings ahead!! Surely a more sensible option is to keep the centres open to all, introduce universal fee's to sessions at each of the centres, and for health professionals to issue free membership cards/vouchers/ record card for those genuinely vulnerable/deprived, so they can access for free, discreetly, without it being public knowledge, allowing these people some dignity, and the positive benefit from accessing a facility used by all. Invest in our current centres, and the amazing people, paid and volunteers, who dedicate their time to providing invaluable support to our NHS/community/society as a whole. Speak to the people this relates to, the mums/dads/staff and NOT management consultants and executives!!

Please keep all centres open I feel that closing them would really have a negative impact on young children as it helps them to socialise at a young age, it also helps mums to make friends when otherwise may become isolated.

Maintaining the children's centres but charging parents fees for all or some activities. Consider only closing children's centres where under used, for example closing the least used 25%.

I feel the centre provide a much needed resource and meeting point for families. By just targeting specific families to receive help, then their will be a majority of families will not get the support the need. Also by taking away activities for some you will be making families become more introvert.

Keep the Childrens Centres open for all. They are vitally important for all families whether they be disadvantaged or not. Those who can afford it could pay more for sessions.

Younger children do not need much space. This decision has no meaning in terms of space saving.

To leave the children's centers alone to do the wonderful work they are already doing.

There doesn't appear to be a space for general comments in this consultation response so I am using this box but this is not a suggestion of an alternative proposal. I appreciate that the Council needs to save money and I can see that Central Government funding is entirely based on funding for vulnerable children. However, the children's centres provided me with an invaluable source of support and opportunities for play for my son when I was alone on maternity leave, when he was too young to go to nursery, and I was very vulnerable suffering from depression. I am looking to have a further child in the near future and the idea of doing this without the opportunity to take my children to a children's centre simply for their social development and support for me in terms of spending time with other parents and for the support that was provided by the staff makes the whole thing seem all the more daunting. I do not mind travelling to a super hub, and I do not mind paying for the time that I spend there, but I am very concerned that in the



drive to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are catered for, those of us that are not generally vulnerable but are made so by the experience of child birth, and our children, will not have the support and assistance that the children's centres have previously provided so well.

Firstly the council should make available ALL the data on the children's centres. How can anyone have an opinion on their suggestions without having some data on which to base that opinion? The only opinion I have is that there is evidence of a lazy, inept, incapable council which having to face a very difficult decision has made no effort to look at serving those for whom it functions (one can hardly say 'works' since there is little or no evidence of any work being done on this). There is no evidence presented on current costs of running the current system never mind a breakdown of what constitutes those costs. Neither is there a projection of the costs going forward. When there should be a spreadsheet model of the service and all the costs of providing it, to not even be presented with basic costs shows just how incapable the council officers are to make any suggestion of what should be done. That councillors are not demanding that this be made available to all parties shows how incapable they are of making a decision on the issue. To present a document which, with the lack of any clear evidence, randomly closes the centres, states "the alternative is to do nothing" only underlines the arrogant cavalier attitude of those producing the consultation paper, (Jim Royle would have quite adequately commented on the word "consultation"). Where is the full risk analysis which clearly shows all the risks in closing any child centre never mind most of them? Where is the breakdown of the required outcomes (objectives) of having a network of children's centres, the criteria against which the objectives were measured and what the yearly assessments were? Surely if they are to be closed there must be evidence that they are not working. Where is that evidence? Speaking personally the children's centres mean nothing to me, except like so many others I pay for them. If the council feels that it is a worthwhile move to close them then demonstrate it, conclusively, no attempt has been made to do this. If the service can be demonstrated as having value to the community, leave it or provide a number of viable alternatives for the community it currently serves. The council should have all the data on these centres, it's what the IT we pay so much for is all about, if the council has not set objectives for them, monitored them, assessed them on a regular basis then it should be looking at reducing costs by culling it's management structure, they're not managing in a modern environment. Finally it's not up to the users to prove that they should be left open unless they have all the data collected on them and all the data of the city wide parameters within which a decision is to be made

My alternative proposal is that the proposed centres are not closed and no super-hubs created. The focus of help on designated deprived areas is wrong when it comes to babies and children. All parents can need the services currently provided by the children's centres regardless of their socio-economic position. something as simple as the opportunities to meet other carers makes a big difference psychologically for people who are alone with a child all day and there are no affordable private places in Peterborough.

All parents I have spoken with would gladly pay for these sessions etc and pay towards the upkeep of the centres and already agree that a voucher system be put in place for 'less fortunate' parents.

I think it is a disgrace to close the services of the children's centres. The reason that they are doing such a good job is that they are open to everyone. As soon as you single out the needy families they would not want to attend. The groups held at the centres for everyone are vital for babies. My child has attended little wrigglers and you can see in her what a fabulous opportunity it has been for her to socialise. She is kind and careful of the babies and that is because she has grown up attending this group. She has no other opportunities to socialise as we do not have any family. The baby group is vital for new mums it was sometimes the only opportunity to put my baby down and have a hot cup of coffee all week. Providing 15 hours of child care for three year olds is simply not enough for you to believe you have done anything to help children and families. If anything throwing children in a room at 3 and expecting them to get along when they have had little to no social interaction with other children would be damaging! This is what you are proposing to do by closing the centres. The groups the centres provide are invaluable for parents and children the private groups are simply too expensive to attend on a regular basis. By providing the centres for everyone to attend it makes it possible to help those needy families without singling them out or making them feel different. It was stated in prime ministers questions that more money is being provided for children's centres than before. So I wonder what the council have used the money for. It is a disgrace to even suggest closures what you should be doing is providing more!!

I moved to Peterborough from Cambridge shortly before falling pregnant with my son, I have friends and family in Cambridge and worked there so had no contacts in Peterborough without the children's centres I would have struggled and not made the friends I have. It is an invaluable resource without which you will isolate mums and families these are

used not just by those on benefits and if a bigger contribution to groups above 50p to £1 is required to keep these valuable groups going then those who have more income I'm sure would contribute to keep this as I definitely would

Keep all centres open and open access to all. Prime Minister said Children's Centres in England have more funding...you have to keep these open and improve the services available. Don't socially isolate anyone. Keep them open!!!

With reference to the proposals to close every children's centre in Peterborough to all except deprived families, my personal concerns are that we have many people in Hampton who are not deprived, but have no family to turn to for support, because we are such a new area, still building our social infrastructure.

Also, with only "officially deprived" families able to access such services, I fear a stigma may become attached to them, leading to many being too proud to attend the centres despite needing them.

I recall a number of years ago, as a first time mother, I was advised I could access a Sure Start centre. I was very young, married, and renting a council house, but I did not consider myself as being the most deprived member of society! I was far too proud to attend the centre, which is a shame, because I would have benefited from it, I'm sure. Opening these centres up to everyone removed the stigma, making the centres truly accessible to all. You are proposing to undo that good work, but there must be a way to keep them open despite the council no longer having money ring-fenced for these centres.

For starters, you could consider if there is flex in any other area of the budget.

Secondly, you could also consider if centres could request discretionary higher session fees from those who are able. I think you'll find a lot of people would rather find a little extra to keep a service open than lose it altogether.

I saw it reported in the Peterborough Telegraph that a proposal has been made to close some Children's Centres. Whilst I don't think, for a moment, that this is actually going to happen, as people will protest and those proposing it will back down, as usual, I would like to point out that not everyone is against the idea. All attempts to rein in public spending will impact on Users, who will complain loudly, and this is no different. Go ahead and close them. Public bodies are still spending FAR too much.

You don't need to live in a deprived area/state to need children's centres. People in the deprived areas are the ones that do not seem to use these centres. The Tunnel opened over the summer holidays, Free activities for children for people living in orton. I went nearly every time, and I did not see hardly any of these deprived parents attend.

As a full time mummy I am gutted my baby's will have their special local fun filled educational playgroup ripped from them. I've heard as I'm not involved with social services or on benefits I won't be able to trek to the hubs if I wanted to. It is the working class tax payers that suffer yet again. My group has just started a fee and I would pay more if it kept it open. Love how you have put a price on children's social and education. We'll use the money saved to buy a cinema for them sit on their arses and get obese on sweets n coke instead. Why don't u increase fees. Couple of quid per session and get donations from holding fates\car boots\discos etc.

I feel that the centres are not the primary problem. Though there is scope for improvement in layout to make the buildings more welcoming. The issue is lack of use and not charging commercially for delivery to end users.

The services are underused because of several reasons. These issues need to be addressed 1st, not the buildings. I believe the centres have a big perception problem and also many parents don't rate the benefits of the services..... a marketing issue.

I believe there is scope to increase fees charged and to bring in other revenues by providing a venue to private children's service providers and activities.

Issues to put effort and money behind:

1. Benefits of the services offered are not understood.
2. When choosing how to spend time with their children, other paid activities are trusted ahead of the free services of the centre. These higher cost services by contracted providers should be brought into the centres.

3. There is an apprehension around joining in and fear of being preached too at a centre. Help is needed here.

It is easier for parents to do nothing than to actively strive to join in with these activities. If inconvenience is increased to many by moving services further away, less parents will be motivated to join in and the chances for progress on any of the 3 points is reduced.

Improvements to the local services is a better option to help support this region's parents and very young.

It is in the 1st 3 years of a child's life that 90% of the child's brain is formed, so the majority of behaviour, character and intelligence tendency is set for life in this stage. We need to help families bring up social, confident, emotionally mature, creative individuals for the benefit of all our futures.

I am glad there is a review, but please look at the services from the end user perspective. Centralised services or targeted locations can only be step backwards. The centres are helping to keep communities alive allowing experiences and connections vital for a child's life in the local area. The value of the centres is as much as community hubs helping with social cohesion than as just service centres for the young.

A suggestion is to work with other interested parties (such as NCT and MumsNet) to evaluate services offered and to put money, skill and time behind promotion of these services. Efforts to provide profitable services and combine functions with other venues at the local level should be priority over cost saving and centralisation.

If there is an opportunity to improve the buildings, a more welcoming environment should be considered.

## South Locality

I would urge you not to close so many children's centres south of the city. The whole of the south will have to go to Orton, unfair? Where will the dads groups go? Stanground dads group on a Saturday is amazing, please don't shut it down

Stanground and Hampton are important and not accounted for in proposals. Stanground is isolated on public transport and Hampton will see rising PND etc without services for children

I, honestly, urge you not to close all the centres south of the city. Admittedly, I would not be in your deprived target audience (I am married, educated, professional), I can honestly say that I would have been very stuck when I first became a Mum 3 years ago. I went to baby massage and met 3 people who became my life line. It sound dramatic but they honestly are my best friends. We met up at least once a week and still see each other all the time. I also want to say that it is not just the Mum's who are affected. My husband has real confidence issues but I 'forced' him to go to Saturdads to socialise with our son. Jason, Teresa and Debbie really made him feel welcome and it upsets me to think that this group would close. I do understand that cuts need to be made but only proposing one children's centre South of the city is madness. No one goes to Orton! Keep either Stanground or Brewster. Please.

I can not begin to say how devastated my husband and I are at the news of our two local children centres (Stanground and Brewster Ave) closures.

I have a One Year old daughter and my second baby will be due next year. During the last year and a half I have accessed both Stanground and Brewster Ave Children's Centres. The support that the centres gave my family during the months before birth and after are immense.

Both centres are well attended and offer a range of sessions from newborn and beyond. It baffles me why these centres are being closed and therefore the children and parents who access these are left without opportunities to mix with similar parents. In some cases the sessions were a means of getting out and discussing issues with parents and staff who could give advice and strategies to cope. Without this support and often a lifeline for some I fear health visitors, midwives and such like will have more demands upon their case loads.

I for one will be disappointed that the support from the centres will not be there for my second child.

I truly hope some of these centres can be saved.

I am deeply troubled by your proposal to close selected children's centers in Peterborough. I am 31 and a first time mum, I had trouble with breast feeding and confidence and lacked the ability to talk to others, the children's centre was so important to myself and daughter as she will not go to nursery or school till later, it gave her the opportunity to mix and learn and develop with other children.

These centers are vital to all who use them and will in the future. to say they will be only for deprived family's is also wrong I'm not on benefits or have a low waste but like all I have bills and a mortgage to pay for I can not afford private nursery or group costs !! but I would not be able to use your centers.

Myself and many others use Stanground centre and Brewsters avenue this is one of the best run centers I have ever attended.

I hate to be so blunt but you spend a lot of money on providing pretty things in the town the fountains the new block paving to the high street etc.

I really do feel that you should review you policy suggestions thoroughly and talk to parents and famous that use these centers and to people who will be directly affected !!!

I am emailing as I feel very strongly that the council are making the wrong choices when trying to save money. I moved to this city just before giving birth to my son and knew no one here. I realise that the children's centres are supposed to be for deprived families which we are not but actually they are used by all sorts of mums and dads. Through the local centres I have made some wonderful friends and having this resource makes me feel less alone as a new mum. I am writing to you as I am hoping you can understand what a valuable resource is about to be lost. Being able to attend a children's centre means groups which help your child's development, being able to meet and talk to other parents and being able to see a health visitor. I am facing losing 3 of my 4 closest children's centres (Stanground, Brewster Avenue and Hampton) which leaves me facing long lonely days without the activities to attend at these centres. The remaining centre is a hall (the Italian centre in Fletton) which does not run any activities apart from weigh ins that I am aware of.

These centres help bring the communities in this area together which with so many social issues in this city I would have thought you would want to help integration not stop it. I hope that the council is able to understand that this would be a catastrophic move to make.

## **Bretton Children's Centre**

I honestly, urge you not to close all the centres south of the city. Admittedly, I would not be in your deprived target audience (I am married, educated, professional), I can honestly say that I would have been very stuck when I first became a Mum 3 years ago. I went to baby massage and met 3 people who became my life line. It sound dramatic but they honestly are my best friends. We met up at least once a week and still see each other all the time. I also want to say that it is not just the Mum's who are effected. My husband has real confidence issues but I 'forced' him to go to Saturdads to socialise with our son. Jason, Teresa and Debbie really made him feel welcome and it upsets me to think that this group would close. I do understand that cuts need to be made but only proposing one children's centre South of the city is madness. No one goes to Orton! Keep either Stanground or Brewster. Please.

You are storing up a shed load of trouble by moving services further and further afield. Families will not travel. Why was Bretton not given a fair crack of the whip? Other evening sessions were 6pm - 8pm, Bretton was allocated 4pm - 6pm, right on the school run and evening meal time, hence no one could attend.

## Brewster Avenue

Although I understand that money needs to be saved, and that some children centres are undervalued, I am considerably concerned with the proposal to redesignate the Brewster childrens centre.

My reasons are as follows. Firstly, having being pregnant whilst living in Fletton, it was really helpful to be able to attend midwife appointments at the Stanground or Brewsters centres, especially as a working mother. In addition, I often went for weigh-ins at the Brewster centre as I moved to Sugar way and it was the most convenient place to walk to. If the proposal went ahead, the closest centre would be Orton, which is well beyond a reasonable walk away. Secondly, whilst on maternity leave I attended breastfeeding clinic and baby groups. Especially with such events not happening at many venues in the area, the loss of these activities would be massive to the area. Finally, my oldest child attends Brewster infants school, and the breakfast and afternoon club are located in the childrens centre. Without this provision it would be impossible for me to work. I would be concerned about where and if this provision would continue as the site and facilities are perfect.

The purpose of writing you an email is regarding the current proposal of closing down Brewster and other childrens centres. I want to mention here the importance of children's centres in the life of young mothers like me. For me Brewster is a lifeline, my guide, my only way of socialising, my child's first learning step and much, much more that I can't describe in words literally, all I can say is that we can do whatever 's possible to save these centres. You can put charges on it up to £5 or £10 and those who are willing to be a part of it will surely pay. I think than you will also get to know how important are these children centres for us. Secondly, I personally would love to work in any dpt. Voluntarily to give my input, it could be a management work or administration I would love to serve.

But please don't close these centres as they are integral part of our lives. I hope u will consider

I am very distressed to learn of the proposed closure of Brewster Avenue Children's Centre and would like to very strongly request that the closure does not go ahead. I am a first time mother of a baby boy. My son is happy and healthy, I have a supportive husband and am employed by a company with a maternity policy so am luckier than a lots of mums in the area I live in. Having said that, we don't have a car, or any family in Peterborough so being able to put my baby in the pram and walk to Brewster Avenue has been a life saver for me as a new parent. It takes a village to raise a child, but we don't live in close-knit communities anymore. We are very much on our own, so once the early visits by health care professionals have been and gone, being a new Mum at home can be very lonely and isolating. Having small local children's centres where we can drop in, get help, get support and find a new community without having to travel great distances is so important. In my case, I was keen to give our son the best start in life by breastfeeding him, but although it's a natural thing to do, it didn't come naturally to me at all. In the very early days it was such a struggle, I went almost every day to Brewster Avenue for breastfeeding support and the assurance that one day it would get easier. My son is now 9 months old, I am still breastfeeding him and I know there is absolutely no way in the world that would be the case had it not been for the Brewster Avenue Health Visitors, peer support Mums and staff. It took a long time for me to feel confident enough to go further from home with my baby, to tackle public transport and to breastfeed him when we were out and about. In any case, the buses are so often full to capacity, you frequently have to wait for two or three to go past before you can get your pram on board. My son was born in the middle of winter - it snowed for the first 6 weeks of his life and if we'd had to get to Thorpe Road walk-in centre or Orton Children's Centre to see the Health Visitors we just wouldn't have gone. New mums are so vulnerable in the early days. We desperately need a place that is easy to get to, where we feel safe, where we know and trust staff in order to confide in them no matter what our situation or problem. Whatever our financial circumstances, we all need support at one time or another, and having to get a bus and travel half way across the city hoping someone is available to help us isn't making services accessible to those who need them. There's not a person in the UK who doesn't know times are tight financially and the council has a difficult task ahead to balance its finances. Babies and young children don't have a voice, or a vote, or money to pay rates but they are one of our communities greatest assets. If we don't help parents to the very best for them now, the cost of fixing the problems later on will be far greater than the immediate cost-cutting measures. By closing our local children's centre it feels as though the council is abandoning us at a time in our live when we badly need their support - please don't do it.

## Caverstede Children's Centre

Save our Children's Centre Childminding group (Caverstede) - Being a childminder for many years has been very rewarding but at times can be quiet isolated. The children centre plays a very big part in our community and for us childminders will be a great loss to us. It has enabled us to: - Meet other child minders and their children; provided the children with a very happy and structured play session each week; gave children confidence to make positive relationships with other practitioners and their peers; for individual children to join larger groups, to learn, share, take turns and also prepare for school; have had support and advice from talented practitioners on certain issues i.e. behaviour management, language problems, family breakdowns and extra support for vulnerable 2 year olds; to work as a team and provide children's learning and their achievements in all areas of development; share ideas and also borrow resources i.e. books and multi cultural toys for children whose English is their second language; encourage healthy eating and growing vegetables in their vegetable garden and try new foods i.e. 'Chinese new year and most important to gain social skills; please keep our children's centre open, we don't want to go back to being isolated!

Our children are said to be the future but what future will they be facing if they do not receive the social and other skills needed when starting school. My daughter was extremely shy when we first attended Caverstede, I've seen her grow so much in such a short space of time

We seem to be losing a valuable asset to "Early Years" children's experience. In our 3 years attending Caverstede's "groups" we have seen the benefits to children and families, the improvement in self esteem and confidence in parents that are struggling in coping. We appreciate the professionalism of the staff as they offer support

I feel the centres have done a fantastic job. Caverstede has had outstanding many times. Surely this should come into account for something. I agree the vulnerable children need help however let's not leave behind the other children

The children's centre at the moment works well as they are; they support families and young people with services. Changing them to super hubs will disadvantage people who cannot drive to the centres. I myself use the centre; both my husband and I work full time. We use Caverstede Children's Centre to help build both my daughters social skills and to help integrate with children and families who they may not come across within their life path. My eldest daughter had no language until 11 months ago and attending these settings such as rhyme time and tots helped develop her signing in order to communicate with us as a family. My daughter now attends Caverstede nursery and the progression from the groups to nursery has been nothing but wonderful. Each morning someone from the children's centres leads story time; reading a book every day for the week; giving topics such as Eid, fireworks and starting school and the chance for the children to have repetition. Story time has helped both my children concentrate and question what happens in a book; taking away the children's centre will take away this skill they have both developed since September. My youngest daughter attends the children's centres still; she loves rhyme time and the songs and rhymes she now has and can sing is amazing. I sing at home with her but having a group where we can sing together is an important part of our morning and her development. Working part time; my mother has my children three times a week; taking away this service means that we are taking away a part of their day; where would they go now and get the service, attention and care from the staff at the children's centre which they receive now. My husband takes my daughters every two weeks to Dad's club and loves the hour and a half he has sole charge of the children; the chance for father and daughter time. He and they come home happy full of stories they have done and people they have met. I fully appreciate the fact that the council has to cut funding in certain places; but to cut funding on a service which affects the children of our future seems absolutely outrageous. Parents need services close by to them where they can attend groups, be supported and in some cases have respite. Having super hubs will not work; these are spread out over the city and will be overcrowded (if they work) or not used because staff do not have the time with parents as they do at Caverstede now and I'm sure in other settings.

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I am very concerned and upset about the news that my local Childrens Centre is to close. I live in Walton and go to Caverstede Childrens Centre regularly with my daughter and I also did when my eldest daughter (who is now at school) was young. I have attended the Baby groups and Tots groups and the wonderful singing group called Rhyme Time. They are all excellent groups and are run by brilliant, friendly staff. The staff are so important as they make such an effort to get to know you and your child and the groups have helped both the social and intellectual development of my children.

I do not drive so find it difficult to travel to groups that are further away, the walk is just too long, especially in bad weather. Taking a bus would make the whole trip far too expensive and time consuming and I find it difficult to travel by bus with a buggy. It is so handy having a well run group just round the corner from me. It was so important when my first daughter was a baby as I didn't know any other mums and felt isolated being at home all day with my baby. It was invaluable for me to just be able to pop round the corner to a group at my Childrens Centre and see the friendly faces of other parents and the helpful staff and chat to them. It was essential for my well being. Not to mention it being great for my baby to socialize with other children and use the group's resources. I learnt a great deal through the Centre about different ways to entertain my baby and support her learning.

Caverstede also hold groups and activities during the school holidays which is very useful as a lot of other groups do not take place out of term time. It can be difficult to find affordable ways to entertain your children during the holiday periods. I would really miss this facility if the Centre was to close.

I am not financially disadvantaged, but I am a stay at home mum and do not have much spare money to pay for more expensive, privately run groups. I wouldn't find it easy to get to them anyway. I feel like I am losing out on a really important resource just because I do not live in a deprived area.

I know that they are many other parents who share my views. A huge amount of families will really miss out if the Childrens Centres were to be decommissioned.

As I am unable to attend the lunch time meeting at Caverstede Centre on November 29th I would like you to accept my points and opinions via this email.

- 1 How do you define vulnerability?
- 2 Vulnerable can be deprived families as well as children who have additional needs.
- 3 Children with additional needs are often only picked up if families are aware of difficulties.
- 4 Children Centres can identify these needs and support families and initiate early intervention with agencies.
- 5 If there are no Children Centres then children will not be picked up before they attend nursery therefore, the 2 years of early intervention is automatically taken away.
- 6 So much research has been done about hands on early intervention.... not just Health Visitors calling round parents houses for a quick chat handing out leaflets.
- 7 Not all Parents are able to travel to the planned Super Hubs and quite often prefer to stay in their own catchment

area.

8 Has anyone thought how the parents who need the local Centres will finance the travel to the Super Hubs quite often money is a big issue for some parents.

Parents who are feeling vulnerable come to the Children's Centre Like Caverstede because there they can mix with a variety of people and feel accepted, they come to chat and have a coffee to forget about their own troubles for a while... they don't always want to be with people who have similar problems...when they need support and comfort the CC Staff who are highly trained and skilled practitioners and there.

I am a Grandparent looking after 2 children age 3 years and 22 months I have these children 9 hours a day 3 days a week.. Caverstede Children's Centre has been a lifeline to me. If this facility is taken away from us then we will struggle.

Caverstede Children's Centre has been awarded outstanding again by Ofsted...surely that speaks volumes.

I heard David Cameron on TV saying Children's Centre should not close. In light of his statement could someone please tell me why Caverstede Children's centre is highlighted for closure.

### **East Rural Children's Centre (Eye and Thorney)**

Within Eye the Leeds hall and Manor Farm Community Centre may have capacity to host some of these services currently provided within the current Children's centres, should the transfer of Pre-school and After school be linked to the school However, I have no information as to if this is a viable option

Work with local communities to ensure facilities are used FULLY in Eye & Thorney instead of part time. Parent Committee run & funded groups could run in addition to current sessions.

### **Hampton Children's Centre**

Orton and Hampton are already twinned therefore cuts at Hampton will naturally affect Orton. Parents need professionals to run sessions, the parents cannot run these sessions themselves. Where sessions are run by parents they will not reach those who really need them.

Review the provisions for 0-2 years in Hampton as if the Children's Centre closes there will be nothing where Early Years practitioners are available to give advice and support to parents

Your assessment of "deprived" is flawed. No area has 100% or 0% deprivation. All parents need support regardless of income level. All children benefit from socialisation opportunities. Children's centres should be retained in areas where there is a high proportion of parents who don't have family close by. The proposal claims Hampton has 0% deprivation, yet PCC's Childcare Services in Peterborough April 2012 Annual Review [<http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pdf/ChildrenAndFamilies-EarlyYearsAndChildcare-InformationForParentsAndFamilies-ChildcareSufficiencyAssessments-CSAAssessmentBook2012v3.pdf>] states on page 30 that 21% of children in the Hampton area are dependent on workless benefits, and are shown under the "Deprivation" heading. It also states that the proportion of these children has almost doubled in two years. I propose that you retain the use of children's centres for all parents. Ideally all, but at least keep some for everyone's use. If only "officially deprived" families are able to access such services, I fear a stigma may become attached to them, leading to many being too proud to attend the centres despite needing them. I know from personal experience that this was the case when Sure Start centres were first set up. I am aware that the government has not reduced the funding it provides for early years provision but, because it is no longer ring-fenced, it appears you wish to cut services here in order to meet shortfalls elsewhere in the budget. This is not acceptable. Cut council allowances (I understand they've recently been voted to increase); turn the fountains off until budgets/economy are in a better place; publish the detail of council finances so we can provide further suggestions with the benefit of full information.



Hampton is the largest estate in Europe. The community is fairly new comparing to other communities. The social root is not as strong, most of the residents don't have extended family live in the same area. There are a lot of children under 2; lots of new parents, young parents; single parents. Children's Centre is vital to them. There must be provision for new parents and children under 2.

The decision to close Hampton would have a negative impact on families living in Hampton and this proposal would lead to families not having the support that they currently rely at the moment.

Children's Centres play an essential part in helping to ensure children, families, and communities get the best start in life. The Hampton Children's Centre has access to a whole range of professionals including health visitors, community midwives, family support workers and early year's practitioners. They work closely with families identifying their needs so that the advice and support is specific to each individual family and are the first contact with children and their families in terms of reducing of raising safeguarding children from harm (child protection).

The Hampton Children's Centre currently offer a great range of activities and support for families to enjoy which could include:

- Information and support to find childcare
- Support for children with additional needs
- Drop in sessions for information advice and support etc breastfeeding support
- Healthy lifestyle sessions
- Antenatal and post-natal support
- Young Parents groups including both Mum's and Dad's groups
- Stay and play sessions
- Training, back to work activities and job clubs
- Parenting support
- Information and "sign posting" for debt advice

The Hampton Children's Centre does a lot of preventative work with families to prevent situations moving higher into social care with Children's Services at Peterborough City Council. By removing this vital service that the community relies now will lead to less positive outcomes for children within the local community. We believe that this proposed closure is the wrong decision for the children of Hampton and with OFSTED rating Children's Services as "Inadequate" at Peterborough City Council earlier this year of 2013. OFSTED stated that there are "inadequate" standards in place in terms of safeguarding measures in place to protect children at risk of abuse or neglect within the local authority of Peterborough. This assessment by OFSTED makes the proposal of closing Hampton Children's Centre confusing and wrong based on present current economic climate where more families are struggling to get by and are finding their household incomes considerably reduced which is leading to more families finding themselves in debt and will also this proposal could potentially lead to children having less positive outcomes in terms of their health and wellbeing, child development etc and potentially leading to less intervention being identified for the families who require support and advice.

I hope after reading this that you will chose to support our campaign in "Save the Hampton Children's Centre (Peterborough)" and there are many ways you can do this, by signing our petition, writing to your local MP, writing to Children's Services at Peterborough City Council (email: [childrenscentres@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscentres@peterborough.gov.uk)) or joining our facebook group page "Save the Hampton Children's Centre (Peterborough).

Hampton Children's Centre provides local families with many vital services and support. The network of support we have received has been a key part in mine and my daughter's lives. She has developed so many skills by attending the groups, especially social skills, she would not have been able to develop had it not been for the Children's Centre. Without Hampton Children's Centre, my daughter would not be the child she is today and the 3 of us (me, my partner and daughter) would not have met so many lovely families who we hope will be lifelong friends. As a stay at home mum, I feel that the Children's Centre is an essential of both our lives, from my point of view to access communication with other adults and for my daughter to interact with other children. As I would like to pursue a career in Childcare, I feel that the courses that have been offered to me have been very beneficial for my future career. I am also in the process of applying to be a Volunteer at Hampton Children's Centre as I want to give back some of my time to somewhere that has essentially been a lifesaver for me and hope to help other people feel the same way I do about the centre. Discussions about children's development, sleep pattern, eating habits and knowing other parents are experiencing the same thing makes it a whole lot easier, relieving and reassuring as a first time parent.

Unless people have actually accessed the Hampton Children's Centre, they do not know and understand what it does. Maybe the people that are proposing the closure should actually come and visit the centre and talk to the parents who use it on a regular basis and what it means to them. Literally a lifeline to many and a lifesaver to me so that's why I want to volunteer. The services it provides from antenatal right up to starting primary school are crucial in an ever expanding Hampton. Most of the new houses being built are either bought by families who will need access to services provided by the Children's Centre or couples that will potentially have children in the future.

Just because Hampton is a less deprived area of Peterborough, does not mean we do not need the services of a Children's Centre in our area, WE DO NEED IT. Everyone needs support with being a parent, no matter what your household income is or where you live. We are a low income household living in Hampton and there are a diverse range of families and families with different needs. If people putting these proposals together did their research first they would see that there are single parents, young parents, low income families, people in receipt of benefits just like any other area of Peterborough. There is a Childminding Group and the Little Miracles Group that access the centre. The Hampton Children's Centre provides support for everyone involved in Early Years Care within Hampton. The Hampton Childminders need a facility that is in Hampton, the facility already exists; please do not take it away. I also know a lot of the mums do not have access to a car during the day or cannot drive so getting anywhere else is time consuming and costly. The Hampton Children's Centre is a vital point of contact for new people in the area. They can meet parents who live locally to them. We need a provision for Early Years Care before pre-school. By closing the Hampton Centre and the proposals that have been set out it seems that children below the age of pre-school don't matter.

Expectant Mums would like to know they will get the same support for their unborn child that they did with their other child/children. We currently access the Centre 3 times a week, maybe more depending on the activities provided and I would like to know and have the reassurance that in the future that when I have a second child that I will be able to access the same services locally to me and NOT IN ORTON, as I have done with my daughter.

Anyone can see on my daughter's face that she loves going to the groups at the Hampton Children's Centre. She has gained so much confidence at just 17 months by going to the groups and meeting other children. As she does not attend nursery, all the groups she has been to and continues to go to have been a very beneficial experience.

Has anyone actually stopped to think what impact the closure of Hampton Children's Centre will have on the lives of the families in Hampton Hargate and Hampton Vale? Has anyone stopped to think about how the lack of these services would impact on an ever expanding Hampton? Has anyone putting these proposals together actually experienced the services that Hampton Children's Centre provides?

WE NEED OUR CHILDREN'S CENTRE IN HAMPTON.

I live on Hampton with 2 children under 18 months, the centre is my lifeline. I'm a non driver & this is the only place my kids get to play & I get done adult chat.

I moved here from the north so I have no other support here as all my family are still up there. I was recently diagnosed with post natal depression so the centre will be even life important to me now.

I'm not sure what will happen to my family if you close, I will have no support & no lifeline. Just because I don't live in a 'deprived' area doesn't mean me & my family are any less needy.

Just to add more to my previous email, networking with other mummies helped me to cope with my postnatal depression, also I have no family around here so meeting other mummy friends really helped.

I recently discovered my baby has cow's milk allergy. It was only by talking to other mummies in Hampton and health visitors at Hampton Children's Centre that I found out my baby has rash and diarrhea is because of cows milk allergy. She had it for 3 months and doctors told me it was teething or infection. Once she had diarrhea for over 20 days; 6 to 7 poos a day! I had never thought about cows milk allergy and trusted doctor's advice. Had I not talked to mummies in Hampton and Health visitors at Hampton' I wouldn't know! Now she is on soya milk and Neocate. She has been fine since we stopped cow's milk. I am very grateful to have this opportunity to socialise with other mummies, get professional help from health visitors.

Please do not close Hampton Children's Centre!

## Honeyhill (Paston) Children's Centre

On the 14th February 2011, myself and my husband took on care of our grandson who was 14 months old. Without the help and support of the staff at Honeyhill Children's Centre, my grandson would not be the happy, content child he is now. Our youngest child was 17 when we took our grandson in at the request of Social Services. The staff at Honeyhill rallied around to get us clothing, bedding and even a pushchair as he came to us with practically Nothing!! Social Services could not help us financially due to No funds, so the help and support from Honeyhill meant we were able to provide our grandson with much needed clothing, etc, that myself and my husband could not afford. When my grandson was 2 yrs old we were told by the Social Services to attend as many groups as we possibly could so our grandson was interacting with other children and adults before he went into pre-school in Jan 2013 so he wasn't "like a rabbit in headlights" when he started pre-school. Honeyhill Centre gave us much needed support, we also met other parents who passed on advice, our grandson was able to play in a safe environment with other children, without this kind of service I don't think we would have coped and our grandson could have ended up in the care system instead of with birth relations.

I am a resident of Paston and attend Honeyhill Children's Centre, I have 3 children aged 5, 2 and 4 months. I am the chair of the Parents Action Group, we have a fantastic group of parents, who very pro active, in fund raising, so we can have trips, parties etc. We are all very worried about Honeyhill becoming a "super hub".

My understanding of the "superhub" is that universal services will stop and there will be no open access, unless you are a targeted family? My children, although not in a targeted family have all benefited from attending our childrens centre, in fact even myself and my husband have.

My middle child, is nearly 3 and will be eligible for a funded preschool place in April, our 2 preschools are full! Where do I take her if Honeyhill closes? What social interaction will she get? If Honeyhill stays open, there's a stay and play session for her most days.

Honeyhill offers a wide range of activities:

- Jumping beans
- Baby group
- Humming bee's
- Sticky bee's
- Messy play
- Cooking group
- Saturdad's

As well as a wonderful library, adult learning, baby clinic, children's drama and a adult drama group. Cross Keys Homes, Midwife, job centre and food bank are based here too.

I am disappointed that these proposals are even being considered, sure start centres in Peterborough are so important. The proof is all around in the children who attend the centres, I have seen how my own children have blossomed and thrived.

## Orton Children's Centre

I just wanted to give my thoughts on the closures.

I use orton, if this is turned into a super hub the way I understand it is that I will still loose the centre as I know it. I have two children a 6 year old and a 2 year old. After having my 2 year old I really struggled, after being advised to go to my doctors by my health visitor I was told I had depression and would be placed on a 3 month waiting list for counseling. 3 months?! My health visitor then got me involved with a time for you session at the centre and also encouraged me to go to groups. This service has been invaluable for me and my son. Without it I really don't know what

I would have done. They gave me back the chance to enjoy time with my baby. I didn't need the counselling by the time I reached the top of the waiting list. The centre makes you feel included in your local community, gives your children structured opportunities to mix with larger groups of children which most wouldn't get the chance to otherwise. I have gained lots of useful advice from health visitors etc at the centre and met many people whom my son now socialises with regularly. It provides opportunities for my 6 year old too as I sign up for many of the half term activities much of which I wouldn't be able to afford otherwise. We are not a family that would be classed as deprived or especially needy, my partner has a full time managerial job, we own our own house and a car. But it doesn't mean we have any spare income after bills to enable us to pay for other groups for my children like swimming or anything of any cost on a weekly basis which many ask for, it doesn't mean that because we have them things I was exempt from feeling depressed and low after having my youngest son.

Like myself when you have been working and then have to give up your job as you can no longer afford child care for two children most of the friends and social network you would have also all have jobs therefore during the day at home with children can be very lonely and not only does the parent suffer from that but that has a knock on effect to the children. This is where the children's centre is vital, you don't have to be deprived to feel in need of help and this is what the children's centre offers whatever your background, everyone is welcome. Closing and turning them into super hubs would leave so many people cut off, lonely and no where to turn. Lots of children would have little if any social interaction with other children before the free funding at the age of 3 if it wasn't for these centres. What impact would that have?!

### **Stanground Children's Centre**

I am a Health Visitor based at Stanground GP surgery and I do not believe that Stanground will remain an area of low need. With the new Cardea estate opening the level of families with complex social needs in this area has greatly increased and indeed social workers are already asking what services are available in this area for clients and apart from the children's centre there is nothing. A large proportion of social housing families on the Cardea estate do not drive and many of them won't be able to afford the bus fares to Orton or want to travel that far for support. I think the distance you are asking people to travel from Stanground via the bus routes with very young children is unreasonable. Currently in the Stanground area the children's centre is the only place to offer young families support and although quoted in the proposal document Health Visitor numbers have increased in Peterborough they have not increased here in Stanground, we are actually working below recommended staffing figures and us Health visitors at Stanground surgery actually work for Cambridgeshire Community Services not CPFT. What I am concerned about is once you take the children's centre away from Stanground there is going to be nowhere for parents with young children to get guidance, there is also a lack of suitable venues in the area for groups to be run from with the equipment and surrounding that young children need.

### **Werrington Children's Centre**

I am so unhappy of the proposed closing of Werrington children's centre, My daughter and I have attend the centre for 2 years, we have been supported by the staff regarding money matters, help with my daughter. My daughter has lots of friends at the play group.. the groups have kept me going as a single mum.. I do not have the money to travel to the OTHER groups.. I have suffered from depression and over the last year from the support of the staff and groups have felt well enough to come off my tablets ... we attend groups everyday at Werrington.. I am now wondering what is going to happen to me next year when we do not have these classes to attend !! Its not just a children's centre it is part of my life gives me a reason to get up and get dressed every day ! Three ladies from the PASTON area attend the Werrington centre as PASTON in there words IS NOT NICE... I attend lots of groups before I decided WERRINGTON was the best one. PLEASE RECONSIDER!!!!

It would be deeply detrimental to Peterborough to close or re-designate any of the Children centres. I relied heavily upon the support given by Werrington Children's centre when my baby was born and dread to think what will happen in the future if that support is no longer there. I do not come from a "deprived" situation and would therefore not be eligible for help from the new proposed centres, but even if I was it would be very unlikely I would be able to use them due to transport issues around Peterborough.

## **Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre**

As a business we are concerned that if the children's centre based at Highlees Primary Schools used to accommodate more 2 year old childcare spaces, that there will be a saturation of pre-school provision and not enough children in the area to take up these places, placing the existing 5 pre-school provisions under threat of losing business

## **Wittering Children's Centre**

It is my submission that if the Covenant does not step in to support the military personnel there is going to be a media storm. The categorisation of "deprivation" does not get any worse than the stress these families are under as a result of the commitment of military personnel to the cause and just because the wives and some husbands cope, or do not seek help (sometimes because they are not embedded in the community as they move around so much), does not mean that the council can write them off. Further Wittering suffers from a lack of longevity as a result of the population mobility, accordingly the school finds it difficult to attract support of the right calibre that is in for the long haul. The idea that a voluntary run organisation can thrive in the setting is misguided. Basically Wittering presents unique problems, that cannot and should not be treated in the same pool as the rest of the candidates for closure. I think there is a legal issue too, the withdrawal of funding is effective closure, and the commitment to provide support in basically taking a chance on finding further funding is an untried format and therefore does not get round the issue.

Wittering children's centre provides an invaluable service for the village of Wittering and many surrounding villages. It's is not purely providing for service children but also many civilian families. As a non service parent I completely value this service. I have also witnessed first hand the life line it offers mothers and young children of service families. These families put their lives on the line for our country and other vulnerable communities. Those left at home not only live under the threat that their loved one may not return but if they do what emotional state they will be in. To hear that these families are not considered vulnerable and the services provided by the centre not valued is completely shocking

Whilst I understand the need for budget cuts and streamlining I feel that this is short sighted on the part of the council. The LA have only just come out of a category with regards to Children's services and by effectively removing the first line of support then a whole wave of issues are going to appear in the near future. The systems will be overloaded again and we shall return to a reactionary situation. The centre at Wittering is well used and the rural communities are at risk of being cut off completely as the impression the plan gives is that if you are not in the centre of the city then there is no provision. Public transport from the rural areas is poor at best. With council spending on vanity projects seemingly on the increase it is shortsighted to lose the support that people receive especially those families. I also strongly feel that the council are putting at risk their previously good relationship with the armed forces by removing one of the few resources for support that you offer as a council. When discussing this I am often told by council employees that the RAF should pay for things. It is not the partners and children of service personnel who are employed by the RAF but they are the ones who will potentially lose any support that the council currently offer.

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