

**Directorate of Children's Services**

# **Consultation on the Future of Sure Start Children's Centres in Dudley – November 2013**

***'Putting children and young people first in Dudley'***

***12 November 2013***

**Jane Porter  
Director of Children's Services**

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Directorate of Children's Services  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
West Midlands DY1 1JQ

## **Consultation Document**

**Consultation on:** *The Future of Sure Start Children's Centres in Dudley – November 2013*

**Summary:** Dudley Borough Council is proposing to make savings of £2.3 million on its Children's Centre budget of £5.6 million. This is part of a larger package of proposed savings of around £26 million over three years across all of its services. The budget reduction will have a significant impact on all of the services provided by Dudley Borough Council but the council must ensure that there is sufficient provision of children's centres to meet the needs of parents, prospective parents and young children in the area and to support its goal to eradicate child poverty. The consultation proposes how resources can be more focused on direct services for children and their families. They will deliver the required savings whilst ensuring wide coverage across the borough and continued access to a nearby centre for those in greatest need. The aim of the proposals for Sure Start Children's centre services are:

- To continue to offer sufficient provision via children's centres to meet the needs of children and families in the Dudley area
- To ensure we continue to give support to those children and families who are in greatest need
- To deliver savings of £2.3 million by April 2016
- To improve co-ordination and access to a range of services for families with children under 5.

**Deadline:** *All responses must be received **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014***

**Public Access** Consultations, plans and policies will be published as follows:

Public Libraries  
Dudley MBC website [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk)  
Westox House

**Responses to:** CONSULTATION RESPONSES  
Executive Support Team  
Directorate of Children's Services  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley DY1 1JQ  
[director.children@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:director.children@dudley.gov.uk)

*Your responses will be co-ordinated by this team.  
Any responses will be provided by the appropriate responsible  
officer for this consultation.*

All responses may be published. A **large print version**, and translation into other languages is available on request to the above address.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Porter', with a horizontal line drawn underneath.

Jane Porter  
Director of Children's Services

**Consultees:**

African Caribbean Community Network	Action for Children
Aquarius	Action for Disabled People and Carers
Brierley Hill Asian Welfare and Cultural Association	Barnardos
Centre for Equality & Diversity	Brierley Hill Community Forum
Chairs of Governors	Castle & Priory Regeneration Board
Children's Centres	DOSTI
Children's Trust Executive Board	Dudley Muslim Forum
Community Centres	Dudley Voluntary Learning Network
Councillors	Dudley Women's Forum
Directorate Staff	Further Education Colleges
Dudley Asian Women's Centre	Headteachers
Dudley Association of Governing Bodies	Libraries
Dudley Borough Churches Forum	Members of Parliament
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network	Roman Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission
Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre	Select Committee for Children's Services
Dudley Community Partnership	Strategic Health Authority
Dudley Council Directorates	Unions and Professional Associations
Dudley Council for Voluntary Service	Voluntary Sector Network
Dudley Group of Hospitals	West Midlands Consortium Service for Travelling Children, Schools and Families (WMCESTC)
Dudley Mind	West Midlands Fire Service
Dudley Muslim Association	West Midlands Police
Dudley Parent Partnership	Worcester Diocesan Board of Education
Dudley Primary Care Trust	
Dudley Safeguarding Children's Board	
Dudley Social Business Partnership	
Fens Pool Voluntary Association	

## Sure Start children's centres in Dudley

### Foreword

Sure Start children's centres play a significant role in providing effective early childhood services for families and young children, particularly those who are recognised as being in most need of help and support. They provide a practical way of bringing together services such as health visiting, midwifery, employment services and adult learning into one place, sometimes alongside childcare and more targeted services for children and families in need of them.

Sure Start children's centres in Dudley have become an integral part of life for many children under 5, as well as for their parents and carers. Centres have put into action the aims set out by the Department for Education to identify, reach and help all families, and particularly those in greatest need of support, with an emphasis on:

- Child development and school readiness
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills
- Child and family health and life chances

Services in Dudley provide antenatal care in conjunction with midwives; health checks involving the health visitors; sessions for parents on health matters; parenting and child development; and a range of sessions to help the children to develop the physical, social, emotional or communication skills they need for the future. They also provide parents, and prospective parents with advice and guidance on bringing up children and provide access to training and employment information and services.

The services provided by each of the 20 children's centre in Dudley can be found on the website at <http://childrenscentres.dudley.gov.uk/>

The proposals outlined in this document, if implemented, will enable children and families to continue to access a range of advice and support services.

However, the Council needs to sets out a model which is sustainable for the long-term future. The model will deliver the savings of £2.3 million needed and will give continued access to a service for those who are in greatest need.

We would very much like to know what you think of this proposal. The consultation will be running until Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014. If you want to contribute to the consultation, have any queries, want further information or have alternative suggestions, please do get in touch.

Councillor Timothy Crumpton  
Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Jane Porter  
Director of Children's Services

## **Dudley's Vision for its Sure Start children's centres**

### **Why are we consulting?**

Unfortunately, the government has reduced the amount of budget available for local authorities. Dudley Borough Council is proposing to make savings of £2.3 million on its children's centre budget of £5.6 million. This is part of a larger package of proposed savings of around £26 million over three years across all of its services. Even these proposals are expected to leave a shortfall.

The budget reductions will have a significant impact on all of the services provided by Dudley Borough Council, including its children's centres. However, the Council must continue to ensure that there is sufficient provision of children's centres to meet the needs of parents, prospective parents and young children in the area and to support its goal to eradicate child poverty.

It is important that we achieve these reductions in the most efficient way possible and make maximum use of those buildings and facilities which are well used by families. In the current economic climate, it is vital that the Council sets out a model which is sustainable for the long-term future.

The following proposals set out how resources can be more focused on direct services for children and their families. They will deliver the required savings whilst ensuring wide coverage across the borough and continued access to a nearby centre for those in greatest need. We believe that by re-focusing our resources, working closely with health, social care and volunteers and by delivering services where they are most needed, we will maximise what our children's centres can achieve.

We have looked at ways of making these proposed savings whilst minimising the impact on front-line services but there will be a number of changes to service delivery and staffing that are significant and we welcome your feedback on the impact they will have.

### **What are the proposals?**

The aims of the proposals for children's centre services in Dudley are;

- To continue to offer sufficient provision via children's centres to meet the needs of children and families in the Dudley area
- To ensure we continue to give support to those children and families who are in greatest need
- To deliver savings of £2.3 million by April 2016
- To continue to work with partner agencies and organisations to access a range of services for families with children under 5
- To improve co-ordination and access to a range of services for families with children under 5

We propose to change the way our children's centres are organised so that we reduce costs but also ensure that services for children and families in greatest need are prioritised.

### **We propose 3 fundamental changes:**

1. To reduce the number of children's centres from 20 to 13 to save costs on buildings and utilities
2. To link the remaining children's centres into 4 clusters to reduce management and administrative costs (There would be a main centre or "hub" and linked centres or "satellites")
3. To reduce hours at some of the satellite children's centres (research has shown that the use of centres after 3pm is limited – excluding childcare)

### **How is this intended to work?**

- Each cluster will have a manager responsible for the 3 or 4 centres in the cluster. This will reduce management and administration costs.
- All staff will be based at the hub children's centre but work throughout the cluster offering services at the satellites
- The 4 hubs will have a core staff group consisting of a manager; deputy/family support lead; family support workers; early years practitioners; admin manager; admin/reception and part time teacher support
- There will be one advisory board per cluster, responsible for providing advice, assistance and support to enable the planning, monitoring and evaluation of services
- Each of the individual localities will continue to have representation on the new cluster advisory boards including parents and partner agencies
- There will be a single Ofsted inspection per cluster

## What does this mean?

### **1. A reduction in the number of children's centres**

The children's centre services in Dudley must be affordable now and in the future; and must continue to ensure that there is sufficient provision of children's centres to deliver good quality services to children under 5 and their families. In addition, as services also seek to target working with those children under 5 and the families in greatest need, there is now a focus on outreach and working in families own homes.

**To do this we propose to close the following children's centres:**

Children's centre	Wards or part of Wards covered by Reach Area
Gornal	Gornal
Hob Green	Norton Pedmore & Stourbridge East Cradley & Wollescote (part)
Kingswinford & Wall Heath	Kingswinford North & Wall Heath Brockmoor & Pensnett (part) Kingswinford South (part)
Peter's Hill	Amblecote (part) Lye & Wollescote (part)
Quarry Bank	Quarry Bank & Dudley Wood Cradley & Wollescote (part)
Tenterfields	Halesowen South Hayley Green & Cradley South (part)
Wordsley	Wordsley Kingswinford South (part)

School nurseries and pre-schools sharing a site with a children's centre are not included in this proposal.

### **Why are we proposing to close these centres?**

The proposals about closures have been based on:

- The geographical location of the centres .The council needs to ensure that the cluster arrangements maintain a level of accessibility to a children's centre for all children under 5 and their families
- The service needs demonstrated by deprivation and demography of the area



## 2. To link the remaining children's centres into 4 clusters.

The centres will be clustered around localities. This will save costs through reducing levels of management and administration. Although estimated savings of £1.2 million could be made through clustering alone this is less than half the amount of reductions required and would not be sustainable.

The proposed hub centres are all large centres which were built during the first phase of children's centres development, have good facilities and an accessible position to its satellites. All the staff will be based at the hubs.

The satellite centres will all operate on reduced hours, but the specific opening times will be determined if the proposals are accepted so that they reflect the needs in the areas and the services provided. There will be no permanent reception at the satellite centres and they will be opened to accommodate sessions, other professionals and family support as required. It is anticipated that on average the satellite centres will be open approximately 60% of their current opening hours.

Hub Centres	Satellites	Wards covered
Brierley Hill	Bromley Pensnett Woodside	Brockmoor & Pensnett Brierley Hill Kingswinford North & Wall Heath Kingswinford South Wordsley St James's (part) Netherton Woodside & St Andrew's (part) Quarry Bank & Dudley Wood (part)
Butterfly	Little Hands Olive Hill Stourbridge	Amblecote Wollaston & Stourbridge Town Norton Lye & Wollescote Pedmore & Stourbridge East Quarry Bank & Dudley Wood (part) Cradley Hayley Green & Cradley South Belle Vale Halesowen North Halesowen South
Kate's Hill	Netherton Park Priory	Castle & Priory (part) St Thomas's St James's (part) Netherton Woodside & St Andrew's (part)
Wren's Nest	Coseley Queen Victoria	Coseley East Sedgley Gornal Castle & Priory (part) Upper Gornal and Woodsetton

The "Wards covered" is an assessment of where families are likely to come from who access the particular cluster. There may need to be a reorganisation of boundaries for data purposes.

### **3. To reduce hours at some of the satellite children's centres**

The individual number of hours that each satellite centre will be open has not as yet been calculated. It is anticipated that on average the satellite centres will be open approximately 60% of their current opening hours. However, in the case of the satellite centres at Priory, Netherton Park and Woodside the buildings will be open full time due to the provision of full day care but the children's centre services will operate on a reduced basis.

#### **How to have your say?**

We have planned this consultation so that everyone can have their say. Anyone can take part in the consultation, whether or not you are directly affected by the proposed changes.

Your opinions are important to us, and we are keen for as many people as possible to join in the consultation. You have until **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014** to make your views known and to influence the Council's decision.

You can do this by completing the attached questionnaire or letting us have your comments by:

- email to [director.children@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:director.children@dudley.gov.uk) or delivering by hand to one of the children's centres in the borough
- asking the staff at your local children's centre to help you submit a response
- writing to Children's centre consultation. c/o Directorate of Children's Services, Westox House, Trinity Road, Dudley. DY1 1JQ.

Thank you for taking part in our consultation.

#### **What happens after the consultation ends?**

We appreciate that the ongoing review of children's centres will be causing uncertainty for parents, carers and staff

All comments and views we receive will be presented to the council's cabinet member for children's services and they will also be included in a report to the Council's Cabinet meeting scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Your views will be taken into account before there is a final decision.

Any comments you make may be made public, but we will not include your name or any personal information that could identify you.

We will publish the outcome of the consultation on the Dudley children's centres website at <http://childrenscentres.dudley.gov.uk/>

## Comments on the consultation for the Future of Sure Start Children's Centres in Dudley – November 2013

**Please return this form to:**

### **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

**Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
West Midlands DY1 1JQ**

**Email:** [director.children@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:director.children@dudley.gov.uk)

**Fax:** 01384 814202

**Name:** ..... **Organisation:** .....

If you wish to receive an acknowledgement of receipt for your response please provide an email or postal address:

**Contact address** .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### [Public Consultation Questionnaire](#)

We are committed to keeping you involved and are keen to listen to your views. Please complete the following questions to help us make the best decisions on the future of Sure Start children's centre services in Dudley

**Q1**     [Please tick all that apply](#)

I am a parent/carer of children aged under 5	
I am a childminder of children aged under 5	
I will be a parent soon	
I am a professional working with children under 5	
None of these	

Q2 How often do you use children's centre services in Dudley?

Two or more times a week	
Once a week	
Once a month	
Less often than once a month	
Never	

Q3 Which is the nearest children's centre to your home (Please write in the box)

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Q4 Which children's centre(s) do you use? (Please write in the box (es))

1	
2	
3	

#### PROPOSAL 1: REDUCING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Q5 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the number of children's centres (Proposal 1)?

Strongly agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q7
Agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q7
Neither agree nor disagree→		→ Please Go Straight To Q7
Disagree		→ Please Answer Q6
Strongly disagree		→ Please Answer Q6
Don't know		→ Please Go Straight To Q7
I do not wish to comment on this proposal		→ Please Go Straight To Q9

Q6 If you disagree with the proposal, is it the proposed closure of any particular centre(s) that you object to? (Please tick all that apply)

Gornal	
Hob Green	
Kingswinford & Wall Heath	
Peter's Hill	
Quarry Bank	
Tenterfields	
Wordsley	
My objections don't relate to any particular Centre(s)	

Q7 What impact (if any) will the proposed reduction in the number of children's centres have on you? (Please tick all that apply)

No impact	
I will use children's centre services less often	
I will not use children's centres at all	
I will attend alternative (non-children's centre) activities (e.g. swimming, visiting friends, attending other local groups etc.)	
I will attend another children's centre instead	
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	
Don't know	

Q8 Could you tell us why you say that?

## PROPOSAL 2: LINKING CHILDREN'S CENTRES TO REDUCE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce management and administrative costs through linking children's centres (Proposal 2)?

Strongly agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q11
Agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q11
Neither agree nor disagree→		→ Please Go Straight To Q11
Disagree		→ Please Answer Q10
Strongly disagree		→ Please Answer Q10
Don't know		→ Please Go Straight To Q11
I do not wish to comment on this proposal		→ Please Go Straight To Q11

Q10 If you disagree with the proposal to link centres to reduce management and administrative costs, please tell us why.

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### PROPOSAL 3: TO REDUCE OPENING HOURS AT SOME CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours at some children's centres (Proposal 3)?

Strongly agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q13
Agree		→ Please Go Straight To Q13
Neither agree nor disagree→		→ Please Go Straight To Q13
Disagree		→ Please Answer Q12
Strongly disagree		→ Please Answer Q12
Don't know		→ Please Go Straight To Q13
I do not wish to comment on this proposal		→ Please Go Straight To Q14

Q12 If you disagree with the proposal, is it the proposed reduction of opening hours at any particular centre(s) that you object to? (Please tick all that apply)

Bromley Pensnett	
Coseley	
Little Hands	
Netherton Park	
Olive Hill	
Priory	
Queen Victoria	
Stourbridge	
Woodside	
My objections don't relate to any particular Centre(s)	

Q13 What impact (if any) will the proposed reduction in opening hours at some children's centres have on you? (Please tick all that apply)

No impact	
I will use children's centre services less often	
I will not use children's centres at all	
I will attend alternative (non-children's centre) activities	
(e.g. swimming, visiting friends, attending other local groups etc.)	
I will attend another children's centre instead	
Other (please write in)	
Don't know	

Q14 Could you tell us why you say that?

## FURTHER COMMENTS

Q15 Please use this space if you would like to add any further comments about any of the proposals for children's centres:

Should you not wish to complete the questionnaire you may respond by sending your comments by:

- email to [director.children@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:director.children@dudley.gov.uk) or delivering by hand to one of the children's centres in the borough
- asking the staff at your local children's centre to help you submit a response
- writing to: Children's centre consultation. c/o Directorate of Children's Services, Westox House, Trinity Road, Dudley. DY1 1JQ.

Thank you for taking part in our consultation.



## Customer Service feedback on the consultation for the Future of Sure Start Children's Centres in Dudley – November 2013

We are grateful to your comments on the consultation.

To help us ensure that our community engagement and consultation process is working correctly and effectively we would be grateful if you would respond to the questions below and return with your consultation response.

Thank you for your help.

1. Did you find the information about community engagement easy to understand?

Yes		No	
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4. Was the consultation document and any appendices easy to understand?

Yes		No	
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5. If applicable, were the staff who dealt with your enquiry polite, friendly and helpful?

Yes		No	
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6. Were you satisfied with the overall process?

Yes		No	
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7. Do you have any further comments to make about the Council's Community Engagement and Consultation Process?

## ***Equality monitoring of DMBC consultations***

The information you give on this form will be used to enable Dudley Council to assess the impact of its policies on all sections of the community.

The details you provide will be treated confidentially and will be used to ensure that the views of a wide range of groups and individuals are included in the consultation process and given the opportunity to shape Council policies.

If you are completing this form on behalf of an organisation please try to answer the questions in general terms about the people your organisation represents.

**1. Please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Individuals response
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisations response

**2. I would describe my ethnic group, or the ethnic group/s represented by my organisation as:**

**ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH**

<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani
<input type="checkbox"/> Any Other Asian background		

**BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH**

<input type="checkbox"/> African	<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> Any Other Black Background
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**CHINESE OR OTHER**

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
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**MIXED**

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian & White	<input type="checkbox"/> Black African & White	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean & White
<input type="checkbox"/> Any Other Mixed background		

**WHITE**

<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> Any Other White Background
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**RANGE OF ETHNICITIES**

<input type="checkbox"/>	
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**3. I would describe my religion/belief or the religion/beliefs of the people represented by my organisation as:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> No Religion
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> Sikh
<input type="checkbox"/> Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> A range of religions/beliefs
<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown

**4. My gender or the gender of the people my organisation represents is:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed	

**5. My age or the age range of the people my organisation represents is:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 5 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 – 35 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 – 10 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	36 – 45 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	11 – 16 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	46 – 55 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 – 19 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 56 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 – 25 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	A range of ages

**6. I consider myself or many of the people my organisation represents to be:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled	<input type="checkbox"/> Not disabled
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**Note:**

The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 defines a “disabled person” as having “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

**Thank you for completing this form.**

**Please return this form with your consultation response**