

**Children's & Young People  
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**DATE: 17 July, 2013**

**10**

**Children's Centres - Consultation**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr R. Andrew – Children's Services

**Purpose**

To provide the panel with details of the consultation on Children's Centres which ends on 31 July, 2013.

**Recommendations**

That Members of the Panel:-

1. Provide comment on the current support and services offered at Children's Centres and what else could be offered;
2. Consider the extent to which the Council should prioritise Children's Centre services for those children and families in greatest need;
3. Consider and comment on the proposal to group Children's Centres together.

**Report Detail**

**What is the consultation about?**

The Council are determined that every child in Walsall should have the best possible start in life and that this should be especially true for children who are disadvantaged and need early help and support to achieve their potential and thrive.

Consultation is being undertaken on how well children's centres support the families who need them most in providing child and family health services, childcare and other services. How the centres could work better together for children by grouping them together and sharing resources and expertise is being looked at. The Council will keep a network of centres to cover the whole borough and the number and locations will be decided as part of this consultation.

Views are being sought about:

- Current support and services offered at Children's Centres and what else could be offered;
- The extent to which the council should prioritise Children's Centre services for those children and families in greatest need;
- The proposal to group Children's Centres together.

It is important to find out what people and organisations think about these issues before changes are made to children's centres. Consultation will take place with the following groups:

- Families who use Children's Centres services, including childcare;
- Families in groups or communities who don't use centres regularly;
- Staff in Children's Centres;
- Schools with Children's Centres attached;
- Organisations who provide services through Children's Centres;
- The wider community in the Children's Centre areas.

The consultation will end on 31 July 2013.

### **What happens next?**

Over the coming weeks the Council will listen to its communities and take what people and organisations tell us between now and 31 July into account.

The following information will also influence recommendations for the way Children's Centres services are developed:

- The number of babies and young children in different areas and whether the numbers are going up or down;
- The number of children living in low-income households in different parts of the borough;
- The areas of Walsall where children's health or development is more likely to be affected by their circumstances;
- Where families using different Children's Centre locations are coming from, as we know lots of families already use services at locations that are not closest to where they live;
- How accessible the buildings we use are for disabled people.
- The needs of local communities

Proposals will be put together for Children's Centre group areas to focus on the areas where families will benefit most from our support and can access it most easily. This will be reported to Cabinet in the autumn and made available on the website.

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