

Sure Start Children's Centres – Phase 3 Consultation Update

Hampshire County Council has been undertaking consultation on the development of Sure Start Children's Centres across the county, under phase 3 of the Government initiative.

A further 23 children's centres are proposed to be developed to enable access to high quality services for all children under five and their parents. Consultation is central to the development of children's centres in Hampshire with consultation activities having taken place to inform their development.

The consultation period for the proposed strategy came to an end of 31 July 2008. Feedback gathered through consultation events and questionnaires is currently being analysed and developed into a report, which will help guide the final strategy, including Notional Catchment Areas (NCAs).

Feedback

Some general feedback which has been identified by the consultation team, whilst carrying out consultation events, includes:

- general agreement to the strategy, but some specific areas may require greater clarification in the final report;
- the draft NCAs were a useful starting point from a desktop exercise angle, but the importance of local knowledge being added has been invaluable in influencing their final proposed designs; and
- the rurality of areas has been a key issue for discussion and ensuring children's centres with large geographical NCAs reach all their families.

Decision Process

Once the consultation analysis has been completed, the final strategy proposal paper will follow the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services (Education) decision process, starting at the end of August and concluding on the decision day being held on 09 October 2008. On the successful approval of final proposals, these decisions, alongside the consultation summary paper, will be published on the children's centres' consultation website.

Parents and Carers Responses

Although the consultation period for the strategy development section has ended, the 'Parents and Carers' questionnaire will continue to be available (online and hard copy versions) until the 31 December 2008. This is because the questions in the parents and carers version will assist the individual children's centres in developing services specifically to meet the needs of their local communities, whilst delivering the children's centre's core offer. This will aim to provide more time for parents and carers to communicate their needs and participate in decisions regarding the services required.

Any 'Parents and Carers' questionnaires received/post mark dated up to 31 July 2008 will be considered within the strategy consultation stage but the County Council will also use the specific services responses in these questionnaires to contribute to the service development consultation section. Any 'Parents and Carers' questionnaires received/post mark dated after 31 July 2008, will only be considered within the service development consultation section.