

Appendix 1 – Consultation documents

Consultation for phased withdrawal of childcare provision at Bishop’s House Children’s Centre

1 June 2012

What are we proposing to do?

To phase out childcare provision at Bishop’s House Children’s Centre

This would be achieved by:

- Not taking on any new childcare enrolments from September 2012
- Continuing with the current childcare provision for all the children currently enrolled at the centre until they move on to school

All children’s centres will remain open, and no other services at any children’s centre will be affected.

Parents and carers of children not yet enrolled would be advised of vacancies at other local providers – there are at least as many childcare vacancies at these local providers as the number proposed to be phased out at Bishop’s House, and many of them charge lower fees than Bishop’s House. The council will continue to provide places for vulnerable children.

This consultation document seeks your views on this proposal.

Our vision, and what we are trying to achieve

We recognise how important quality affordable childcare is to families, and are committed to continuing to ensure there are sufficient places to meet children’s needs. We have a duty to ensure there is sufficient childcare to meet local needs and our focus is on supporting existing and new providers to offer good-quality, affordable and accessible childcare that families need and want. The legal duty on the council, however, makes clear that local authorities are presumed to be the ‘provider of last resort’ and should be directly providing childcare themselves only where demand outstrips supply and other providers are not delivering sufficient places.

What are the reasons behind the proposal?

Achieving significant budget reductions

The government has cut Southwark’s budget by £90m in real terms over two years. This means the council has had to look at all service areas to achieve savings. We have sought to make those savings in a way that protects the vulnerable as much as possible.

Any decisions about funding reductions must:

- Provide value for money and value for council taxpayers
- Contribute towards the council’s vision of a fairer future and protecting vulnerable people as much as possible

These proposals protect children’s centres’ core services which are to provide access to a range of services covering health, social care and education as well as advice and guidance on employment and parenting support.

The service is not cost-effective

The council is heavily subsidising each place because of high operating costs including staffing – on average some £2,200 a year at Bishop’s House Children’s Centre. These childcare places are not targeted at vulnerable groups. If the council were to propose increasing fees to put the provision on a breakeven footing, it could mean families could have to pay on average approximately £45-55 a week more in order for the service to break even. This option has been ruled out because this would put the weekly cost of childcare out of the reach of local families, particularly vulnerable families. We also recognise that the staffing restructures that would be required to operate without the subsidy could severely impact on the quality of the provision and therefore the experience of the children using it. We strongly believe, too, that, where the market can deliver childcare provision more efficiently, the council should target its reduced resources at vulnerable families.

There is a good supply of high-quality places in the local area

The council monitors the supply of childcare places to make sure there are sufficient places available. The latest statutory assessment, in March 2011, found relatively high levels of vacancies.

We regularly monitor levels of vacancies at other providers. The latest update, in April 2012, found there was still a wide choice of quality vacant places available within 0.5 mile of the children’s centre:

- There are 58 vacancies across the 190 local registered childminding and nursery places – this is greater than the current childcare enrolments at the children’s centre
- All are rated local providers are at least satisfactory, with 9 of the 15 childminders are rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, with one of the three local nursery providers rated good
- These providers typically charge less for childcare than at the children’s centre
- Within 0.5 mile of the centre, there has been a net increase of nine childminding places over the past five years

The children’s centre will remain a major early years and family resource in the community

All other services running at the children’s centre are not affected by this proposal. These other services – such as drop-in sessions for childminders, Stay and Play, parenting programmes and other family learning activities – make up the majority of services at the centre. Not all children’s centres provide childcare, and they are not required by the government to do so. Less than 20% of the users at the children’s centre use the childcare service.

The consultation and decision-making process

Timescales

1 June 2012	Consultation launch
31 July 2012	Consultation ends
August 2012	Report back to cabinet member for children’s services

This consultation proposal is also available on the council’s website at:

<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/consultations>

Who we will consult:

We will consult all parties connected to the children's centres, including:

- Local families who use the children's centre
 - Children's centre staff and their advisory board members
 - The wider community, including local schools
 - Local service providers, including voluntary and private childcare providers
 - MPs and local elected members whose constituencies or wards include the children's centres that are the subject of the proposals or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposals
 - Parents/carers of any children at any children's centre who may be affected by the proposals
 - Armed services families in the area
 - Any trade unions who represent staff at the children's centre; and representatives of any trade union of any other staff at children's centres who may be affected by proposals
 - Local employers' forums
 - Neighbouring local authorities
-

Your views

1. The council is subsidising each place by on average £2,200 a year because of high operating costs such as staffing.

Q1: Do you agree or disagree that the council should withdraw subsidies as a way to achieve budget savings?

Agree Disagree

2. The sufficiency audit shows there are sufficient childcare vacancies in the local area to meet demand. The statutory guidance on the childcare duty says there is a presumption that the council is the 'provider of last resort' and should be directly providing childcare only where demand outstrips supply and no other providers are delivering childcare.

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that the council should only consider providing places when there are not enough provided by the voluntary and private sector?

Agree Disagree

3. The council is facing a £90m cut in real terms over two years, and has to make savings in all areas.

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a phased withdrawal of childcare provision at Bishop's House Children's Centre, meaning that:

- There would be no new childcare enrolments from September 2012
- All the children currently enrolled at the centre would continue to receive childcare there until they move on to school
- No other services at the children's centre will be affected

Agree Disagree

You may wish to give reasons why, or any other comment:

Please let us know if you are:

Parent/carer using Bishop’s House Children’s Centre Local parent/carer of child under
5 Local parent/carer Childcare provider Partner agency Staff
Other _____

Please provide your contact details:

Name:

Address: _____

_____Postcode_____

Email address:

The deadline for comments is **31 July 2012**

Consultation for phased withdrawal of childcare provision at South Bermondsey Children and Families' Centre

1 June 2012

What are we proposing to do?

To phase out childcare provision at South Bermondsey Children and Families' Centre

This would be achieved by:

- Not taking on any new childcare enrolments from September 2012
- Continuing with the current childcare provision for all the children currently enrolled at the centre until they move on to school

All children's centres will remain open, and no other services at any children's centre will be affected.

Parents and carers of children not yet enrolled would be advised of vacancies at other local providers – there are at least as many childcare vacancies at these local providers as the number proposed to be phased out at South Bermondsey, and many of them charge lower fees than South Bermondsey Children and Families' Centre. The council will continue to provide places for vulnerable children.

This consultation document seeks your views on this proposal.

Our vision, and what we are trying to achieve

We recognise how important quality affordable childcare is to families, and are committed to continuing to ensure there are sufficient places to meet children's needs. We have a duty to ensure there is sufficient childcare to meet local needs and our focus is on supporting existing and new providers to offer good-quality, affordable and accessible childcare that families need and want. The legal duty on the council, however, makes clear that local authorities are presumed to be the 'provider of last resort' and should be directly providing childcare themselves only where demand outstrips supply and other providers are not delivering sufficient places.

What are the reasons behind the proposal?

Achieving significant budget reductions

The government has cut Southwark's budget by £90m in real terms over two years. This means the council has had to look at all service areas to achieve savings. We have sought to make those savings in a way that protects the vulnerable as much as possible.

Any decisions about funding reductions must:

- Provide value for money and value for council taxpayers
- Contribute towards the council's vision of a fairer future and protecting vulnerable people as much as possible

These proposals protect children's centres' core services which are to provide access to a range of services covering health, social care and education as well as advice and guidance on employment and parenting support.

The service is not cost-effective

The council is heavily subsidising each place because of high operating costs including staffing – on average some £2,700 a year at South Bermondsey Children and Families' Centre. These childcare places are not targeted at vulnerable groups. If the council were to propose increasing fees to put the provision on a breakeven footing, it could mean families could have to pay on average approximately £45-55 a week more in order for the service to break even. This option has been ruled out because this would put the weekly cost of childcare out of the reach of local families, particularly vulnerable families. We also recognise that the staffing restructures that would be required to operate without the subsidy could severely impact on the quality of the provision and therefore the experience of the children using it. We strongly believe, too, that, where the market can deliver childcare provision more efficiently, the council should target its reduced resources at vulnerable families.

There is a good supply of high-quality places in the local area

The council monitors the supply of childcare places to make sure there are sufficient places available. The latest statutory assessment, in March 2011, found relatively high levels of vacancies.

We regularly monitor levels of vacancies at other providers. The latest update, in April 2012, found there was still a wide choice of quality vacant places available within 0.5 mile of the children's centre:

- There are 80 vacancies across the 259 local registered childminding and nursery places – this is greater than the current enrolments at the children's centre
- All rated local providers are at least satisfactory, with 16 of the 24 childminders rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, as are four of the six local nursery providers
- These providers typically charge less for childcare than at the children's centre
- Within 0.5 mile of the centre, there has been a net increase of 45 nursery places and 42 childminding places over the past five years

The children's centre will remain a major early years and family resource in the community

All other services running at the children's centre are not affected by this proposal. These other services – such as drop-in sessions for childminders, Stay and Play, parenting programmes and other family learning activities – make up the majority of services at the centre.

Not all children's centres provide childcare, and they are not required by the government to do so. Less than 10% of users at the children's centre use the childcare service.

The consultation and decision-making process

Timescales

1 June 2012	Consultation launch
31 July 2012	Consultation ends
August 2012	Report back to cabinet member for children's services

This consultation proposal is also available on the council's website at:

<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/consultations>

Who we will consult:

We will consult all parties connected to the children's centres, including:

- Local families who use the children's centre
 - Children's centre staff and their advisory board members
 - The wider community, including local schools
 - Local service providers, including voluntary and private childcare providers
 - MPs and local elected members whose constituencies or wards include the children's centres that are the subject of the proposals or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposals
 - Parents/carers of any children at any children's centre who may be affected by the proposals
 - Armed services families in the area
 - Any trade unions who represent staff at the children's centre; and representatives of any trade union of any other staff at children's centres who may be affected by proposals
 - Local employers' forums
 - Neighbouring local authorities
-

Your views

1. The council is subsidising each place by on average £2,700 a year because of high operating costs such as staffing.

Q1: Do you agree or disagree that the council should withdraw subsidies as a way to achieve budget savings?

Agree Disagree

2. The sufficiency audit shows there are sufficient childcare vacancies in the local area to meet demand. The statutory guidance on the childcare duty says there is a presumption that the council is the 'provider of last resort' and should be directly providing childcare only where demand outstrips supply and no other providers are delivering childcare.

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that the council should only consider providing places when there are not enough provided by the voluntary and private sector?

Agree Disagree

3. The council is facing a £90m cut in real terms over two years, and has to make savings in all areas.

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a phased withdrawal of childcare provision at South Bermondsey Children's Centre, meaning that:

- There would be no new childcare enrolments from September 2012
- All the children currently enrolled at the centre would continue to receive childcare there until they move on to school
- No other services at the children's centre will be affected

Agree Disagree

You may wish to give reasons why, or any other comment:

Please let us know if you are:

Parent/carer using South Bermondsey CC Local parent/carer of child under 5
Local parent/carer Childcare provider Partner agency Staff
Other _____

Please provide your contact details:

Name:

Address: _____
_____Postcode_____

Email address:

The deadline for comments is **31 July 2012**