

CALL IN - Procurement of a New Model to Deliver Integrated Pre-birth to 19 Health, Wellbeing and Family Support Services - FP/467/04/

Reasons for calling the decision in:

- The proposals clearly breach the statutory guidelines outlined in the report, specifically those compelling the council to:

'not close an existing children's centre site in any reorganisation of provision unless they can demonstrate that the outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged would not be adversely affected and will not compromise the duty to have sufficient children's' centres to meet local need. The starting point should therefore be a presumption against the closure of children's centres.'

'Ensure that a network of children's centres is accessible to all families with young children in their area.'

'Ensure that children's centres and their services are within reasonable reach of all families with young children in urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport.'

- The equality impact assessment for this proposal identified *'a potentially negative impact on young people, on disabled people with mobility difficulties and on women'*; (page reference) This has clearly been ignored, with no bearing on the eventual decision.
- The views of Essex residents (as outlined in the consultation document) have also been discounted. Over 80% (81.4%) of Essex residents disagreed with the core principle of the proposal. Nearly 70% (69.3%) disagreed with the proposed location of services (It's important to note that this call in will seek to examine specific geographic particularities. These include, but are not limited to, Tendring and Colchester.) These concerns are not reflected in the amended proposal. The consultation was conducted far too late in the day to add value to the eventual proposals, and asked the wrong questions to the wrong people.
- The proposals lack any forethought for future outcomes, adversely affecting those most in need of services. A number of these potential friction areas were specifically outlined by Essex residents in the consultation, including:
 - *Accessibility – difficulty or inability getting to proposed Family Hubs due to*

- *distance, inability to drive, poor transport links, cost etc.*
- *Fear of losing the support currently provided by Children's centres – access to*
- *professional help, support and courses*
- *Importance of 'local' sites and services*
- *Satisfaction with current Children's centres – services and staff*
- *Fear of no longer being able to create own support networks in their communities*
- *Children's centres facilitating development of friendships with other parents*
- *Children's centres being of a vital importance, a 'life line'.*

These concerns are also absent from the eventual proposal.

- There is a notable lack of clarity regarding available resources within the various areas that currently make up 0-19 care. The report is vague, referencing previous cuts, as well as future savings, but it does little to outline the real term impact of proposals, and the current state of affairs.
- The further cuts, which will be used to fill holes in the public health budget left by recent reductions in funding from central government, clearly display a priority for savings over quality services, delivered to those most in need. Our concern is that physical children's centres are being sacrificed to meet statutory obligations for more childcare places on a '*commercial basis*' (Pg.143).
- The proposals do little to hold private contractors to account, allowing them a wide brief to interpret as they see fit. We can't allow companies to prioritise commercial interest over quality childcare for our most vulnerable families.
- We are highly sceptical that removing 'the walls' will allow professionals to reach further into the community. Physical centres are the absolute centre of their communities. Care in the community can run alongside the physical centres, not in place of them. The report itself outlines that parents, carers, and families in Essex are feeling increasingly vulnerable and isolated. This decision will create more walls than it breaks down, leaving marginalised families more isolated than before.