

Save Our Children's Centres campaign

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saveourchildrenscentres

HARINGEY'S CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND NURSERY SCHOOLS ARE UNDER IMMEDIATE THREAT

The Council is currently 'consulting' on a plan to close children's centres and cut the budget for early years provision in Haringey by £1.44m over three years.

In response parents, governors and concerned residents have got together to challenge this. We're asking everyone, parents, parents to be, grandparents and residents to join in, and to respond to the consultation. Details of the campaign and what you can do are below.

In addition to the proposed closure of centres, the Council is considering cutting the childcare subsidy which assists working parents and supports quality of provision. This is currently paid to nursery schools and children's centres that provide childcare. This money comes out of the dedicated schools grant which comes from central government, and is separate from the Council's funds, council tax, etc. The double whammy will destabilise centres even more.

The Council's Lead Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Ann Waters, has been disparaging of the quality of services offered by some children's centres and of their ability to deal with enough families. In fact, most centres have met or exceeded the targets set by the local authority for registering and engaging with the families in their local areas. In some cases, this has meant registering or engaging with over 97% of all families with children aged 0-4 in their local area. That is an incredible statistic.

Many parents are aware of the drop in groups, stay and play sessions, baby weighing, etc that is offered at children's centres. Some of us may not know about the essential early help and early intervention work performed by the dedicated staff on a daily basis, both at centres and on an outreach basis, offering practical support to the families most in need. The fact that this targeted support can be delivered through a universal, non-stigmatising service is crucial to its effectiveness.

The threat to Haringey's three nursery schools (Woodlands Park, Rowland Hill and Pembury House) will jeopardise the excellent work all three nursery schools are doing, not only for their own children and families, but in improving quality of early years childcare across the borough in the private, voluntary and independent sector.

If your life has been touched by a children's centre in Haringey or you see how the children's centres help so many people in some of our most deprived areas, please join us to campaign against the closures.

There is no need for the Council to set a three year budget closing children's centres now, only four months before a General Election which might result in a Labour Government.

Labour policy is “to renew and reinvigorate Sure Start, the initiative that set up so many of the children’s centres under the Labour government. The Council could set a one year budget and hold tight in the hope of additional funding that could keep these vital lifelines open for our children, families and communities.

Details of the Corporate Plan are available here:

<http://www.haringey.gov.uk/.../strategie.../strongerharingey.htm>

Full details of the proposed early years cuts (such as they are) are here:

<http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/.../AI.../P1Savings031214.pdf>

NB the amount of the childcare subsidy is not included in this document as it is not part of the Council’s budget. The removal of the subsidy would mean an additional cut of £1.5m across the nursery schools and other children’s centres that provide childcare and could destabilise them completely.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Respond to the Council’s consultation

You can find the online consultation here: <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/.../stronge.../have-your-say-2014.htm>

There are a huge number of cuts being proposed across the board. The consultation invites you to read the Council’s proposals and comment on them, taking into account financial constraints. In connection with the early years sector, it is clear that the proposals are not upfront about the cuts being suggested. You may wish to respond that you support children’s centres in Haringey and you would not want to see centres closed or the childcare subsidy removed.

Write to your local councillors and MP asking them to support children’s centres in Haringey

Ask your councillors to save our children’s centres. There is a meeting of all of the Labour councillors on 21st January at which we understand there will be a debate about whether it is sensible -given the general election is 4 months away - to set a 3 year budget. This has been described as setting a 'footprint'. In other words, the cuts will be implemented. If your councillor is Labour, ask them to support the proposal at that meeting to agree a one year budget instead of the three year budget proposed in the consultation which gives more room for deliberation and change depending on what happens nationally. Our neighbour, Islington, is setting a one year budget. They've also reduced the costs of consultants right down.

You can find out who they are and how to contact them here:

<http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/council/decision-making.htm>

Encourage others to get involved

Please go to our Facebook page and use Twitter and any other networks you are part of to spread the word. # saveourchildrenscentres

Don't forget to share with past and would-be future users of children's centres as well as current users.

Talk to your local children's centre

Find out what is being done at your local children's centre and see how you can support the campaign.

Share your stories

If you have any stories about how children's centres have helped you, please share them using all of the methods above!

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