

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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CONSULTATION ON BEXLEY'S CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Bexley's Children's Centres are set to benefit from a remodelling programme designed to provide additional early help for families and to comply with the government's new initiative to provide more child care places to 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

The changes will see Bexley's Children's Centres providing a range of high-quality children and family services, whilst offering a stronger focus on those who may need additional support.

The plans are due to go out to public consultation later this month. Centre users, staff and partners will have until the beginning of October to comment on the proposed plans.

The centres will continue to offer a range of services and access to health service support. In addition, some centres will have a strengthened child care or new family wellbeing offer.

Families where there is known violence, mental ill-health, substance misuse or the risk of a child being excluded from school will be able to access the new dedicated family wellbeing service.

The children and family centres offering this additional family support are likely to be at St. Augustine's, West Street and Danson.

Managers at these centres would work in partnership with the family support lead officers to organise a range of services and activities, according to local need. Some activities would take place at the three children and family centres and some at smaller 'Children's Centre Wellbeing sites' based at Southlake, North End, North Cray, Falconwood and Oval Health Clinic.

Children Centres at Greenmead, Normandy, St Michael's and, subject to further discussions, Crayford and Northumberland Heath will provide childcare for 2, 3 and 4-year olds in line with the Government's call for additional places by September 2016.

Sidcup Children's Centre is currently closed. Services that were previously offered at this site are now being delivered at a range of alternative venues in the surrounding

area and this is likely to continue because it has worked very well, providing both good value for money and a good model for devolving the provision of services further into Bexley's communities.

Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Cllr Philip Read said: "If finally approved, this reorganisation of our Children's Centres will allow us to offer additional early help to families who need our support before their situation worsens. It means that we can provide that help while continuing to offer a range of high-quality child care and universal services.

"All Centres will still be accessible to families wherever they live in the borough but each will focus on offering a service tailored to local needs and helping those whose requirements are greatest. The changes to the service also allow us to offer greater value for money for Bexley's taxpayers as part of our ongoing Strategy 2018 savings."

Subject to call-in the consultation will begin on 24 August. It will be possible to submit responses at existing Children's Centres via a paper questionnaire or through an online survey at www.bexley.gov.uk/consultations

If agreed the changes would come into place on 1 April 2016.

Results of the Children's Centre consultation carried out earlier this year will be available online from 24 August. These results were a contributing factor in the proposed redesign, together with the Government's requirement for the doubling of additional childcare places for 3 and 4-year-olds.

ENDS

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