19th December 2019

Streatham Better Start Area

Dear Children’s Centre users,

I am writing to you as users of children’s centre services in the Streatham Better Start Area to update you on the council’s proposals for these services from January. The Streatham area currently includes:

- Hitherfield Children’s Centre, Leigham Vale, Streatham, London SW16 2JQ
- Sunnyhill Children’s Centre, Sunnyhill Rd, Streatham, London SW16 2UW
- Streatham Hub Children’s Centre, 388 Streatham High Rd, Streatham, London SW16 6HX
- Woodmansterne Children’s Centre, Stockport Rd, Streatham SW16 5XE

Consultation

Earlier this year the council consulted children’s centre users about changes to Lambeth children’s centres. The first consultation was about proposals to remodel Lambeth children’s centres into Better Start areas with three children’s centres remaining in the Streatham area overseen by one lead school. Under those proposals, delivery of children’s centre services would cease at Sunnyhill Children’s Centre.

The consultation and the need to make changes to children’s centres was driven by significant reductions in the amount of money the council receives from central government to spend on children’s centres. These reductions equate to approximately 35% of the children’s centre budget.

The feedback the council received during that first consultation process demonstrated how highly children and families valued Sunnyhill Children’s Centre. During the consultation, there were also changes at Woodmansterne which made the ongoing delivery of children’s centre services there more difficult.

Lambeth Council’s Cabinet therefore made a decision in April 2019 to proceed with borough wide changes to reduce the overall number of children’s centres in Lambeth and in the Streatham area but requested that further consultation was carried out with service users at Woodmansterne and Sunnyhill children’s centres before any final decision about the venues used for service delivery in that area were made.
This second consultation took place in summer 2019. The feedback and responses that the council received through the two consultation processes demonstrate that there is a high level of concern about proposals for the Streatham area as a whole. These proposals therefore need to be looked at again to make sure that the children’s centre offer for children and families in the Streatham area is as good as it can be within the available budget. You will be asked for your views on revised proposals following the Christmas break.

**Delivery of services from January to March 2020**

In the meantime, from January 2020, Hitherfield Primary School will be responsible for the delivery of children’s centre services across Streatham and will deliver a programme of activities across Hitherfield, Sunnyhill, Streatham Hub and Woodmansterne Children’s Centres. Although it is not possible to deliver a full programme at each centre within the available budget all centres will continue to provide some services for local children and families pending further consultation.

Hitherfield will also be the lead school for the Streatham and Norwood Better Start area. Services will be planned and delivered by one area based staff team, which will be led by Phyllis Hayden as Streatham and Norwood Better Start Area Manager.

In some cases, this will mean staff will be working with new colleagues or in buildings that they have not worked in before, although there will also be lots of familiar faces. To support staff to settle into their new roles, children’s centres in the Streatham Better Start area will have an extended Christmas closure period with a limited programme of activities in the period between 2nd and 15th January 2020.

All centres will reopen from 15th January 2020 with a new programme of activities. The activity timetable for the Streatham Better Start area will be available in early January and will be distributed to all children’s centres, health centres and libraries across the borough. You will also be able to view the timetables online here: [www.lambeth.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/childrenscentres) and to see the wider range of services available for children and families in Lambeth on the Family Information Directory [www.lambeth.gov.uk/fid](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/fid)

As we change the services, we expect that during January and February there will be some things which may not run as smoothly as previously and that the range of services and activities available will take some time to build up. Thank you in advance for your understanding while these changes take place.

While these changes are not easy and have been forced on the council by funding cuts from central government, we are proud that Lambeth still has the 3rd most children’s centres in London and are committed to providing excellent services across the borough.

Best wishes

**Tony Parker**

Director of Children and Young People’s Commissioning and Community Safety,

London Borough Of Lambeth and Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group

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