

Budget EqIA 14: Children Centres

This is an Equality Impact Assessment of the Children Centres saving in the budget. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision making and the implementation process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed projects that are part of the programme is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

The Decision

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of childrens centre service functions, requirements and asset structure to be carried out as part of the Community and Cultural Services Review.

Key Issues

This assessment will review the main changes in the policy.

How likely is it affect people with protected characteristics?

It is likely to adversely affect some people. Children's centres are for children under the age of five and their families.

The decision may decrease the amount of opportunities available to families and children. However settings offer is large and there has been a change in provision since children centres started

Are there alternatives?

Yes. The Time for Twos project provides funding for up to 15 hours of free childcare education for eligible two year olds. We are currently offering a scheme for eligible two year olds in Milton Keynes to receive up to 15 hours per week of free high quality childcare education, to a maximum of 570 hours per academic year (38 weeks). Some childcare providers stretch the entitlement over the whole calendar year at up to 11 hours per week.

From January 2014 in Milton Keynes, a two year old will be eligible if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- They meet the eligibility criteria also used for Free School Meals (FSM).
- Their families receive Working Tax Credits and have annual gross earnings of no more than £16,190 per year
- They have a current Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- They attract Disability Living Allowance

- They are looked after by the local authority
- They have left care through special guardianship or an adoption or residence order.
- They are a child living in England where the family has no recourse to public funds.

What may be lost?

It is unclear what may be lost, however it is likely that a quantity of children centre activities will be lost.

Children/young people with disabilities may experience barriers to accessing services or information which needs to be considered when developing service proposals

Recommendation

It is likely that this decision will adversely impact some disadvantaged children and families, if a number of Children's Centres have to close. However, potential alternative ways of delivering Children's Centre services will be assessed as part of the Community and Cultural Services Review. A EqiA will be completed when individual decisions have been made.