

# Camden Sure Start

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a new approach to  
services for children  
under five



# Consultation on changes to our early education and childcare places and children's centre services

## About this consultation

We know that the first few years of a child's life have a big impact on their future. The experiences children have will influence their health, their relationships and how well they get on at school and beyond.

That's why we have decided to continue to invest £25.5 million a year in providing early years services. We will keep all children's centre buildings open and will continue to offer 25 hours free early education and childcare for three and four year-olds in Council-run children's centres and schools.

But by 2017 Camden's funding from central government will be cut in half compared with 2010. This means that we need to make tough choices about funding services to make essential savings. This includes our early years services, but we are limiting savings to £1.5 million.

We cannot afford to continue to deliver services in the same way, but the changes we are proposing aren't simply about making savings. We are one of the highest spending councils in the country on services for children, but we still have long-standing high rates of child poverty. There are also too many children under five who suffer from poor health and who are not developmentally ready to start school.

We have therefore used this opportunity to make sure that our investment has the biggest positive impact on children's lives.

## What are we proposing?

We have worked with parents, staff and national experts to gather evidence of what works in Camden and in other parts of the United Kingdom and to review the way our services are currently provided. Our review concluded that we can make the most positive impact to children's lives by:

- working together with other organisations, such as the health service, to make sure that we support families in the first 1001 days of their child's life, so that any problems they might experience do not escalate

- making sure that local services reflect the needs of an area and are delivered in ways which work for local people
- changing our early education and childcare offer so that we provide more places for children on the lowest incomes in Camden – these are the children who can benefit the most from high quality experiences in their early life
- helping parents to be able to afford to work, by providing affordable high quality childcare.

We have used this evidence to develop a new proposed Camden Sure Start approach to providing early years services. Our new approach would build on the principles of the national Sure Start programme - making sure families with children under five can access a range of joined-up support, whether it be from a health visitor or a family support worker, in places which are convenient to them.

We would deliver Camden Sure Start services from different places – depending on local need. All of our children's centres would be Camden Sure Start centres and would continue to provide early education and childcare places (sometimes referred to as nursery places). Five of our children's centres would be further developed so that families can access a broader range of support from different organisations – like health, housing services or Jobcentre Plus.

We would also work with other organisations, such as schools and community centres, to make sure that Camden Sure Start services such as drop-in/ stay and play sessions are provided from other local venues according to need.

Our proposals mean changes to some children's centre services from 2016 and changes to which children will be able to take up Council early education and childcare places which would begin in September 2015. We have considered alternative options, which are detailed with each of our preferred proposals. Our proposals for consultation are the options that we believe offer the best opportunities for Camden's children and families.



### What are we consulting on?

- Whether to focus our early education and childcare places on those families on the lowest incomes. This would mean that subsidised places for children under three would no longer be available to all families, regardless of income, and we would no longer provide subsidised childcare for children under two. But it would mean we could increase the number of free and subsidised places available to two year-olds from low income families.
- Whether we take a phased approach to ending community nursery grants to voluntary and community sector organisations, but support these organisations to draw on national funding and develop new business models. We currently give grants to some organisations in Camden to contribute towards the cost of nursery provision, while others operate without this funding.
- Keeping children's centre buildings open but making changes to children's centre services, including changes to drop-in / stay and play sessions and some of the other services which are currently provided at our 14 children's centres.

### Have your say

We want your views on our proposed plans to change our early education and childcare places and some children's centre services. We will use your responses to inform the changes we make to services.

We are also holding parent events and are consulting organisations which will be directly affected by the proposed changes. For more information about consultation events visit [camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart](http://camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart)

Council staff will be consulted on changes to job roles after this consultation and once a Cabinet decision has been made on the future of the service.

### There are two sets of consultation questions which you can respond to:

- changes to early education and childcare (section 1, page 4)
- children's centre changes (section 2, page 8).

We've included them in the same document so it's easy for you to respond to both if you would like to, but the deadlines are different.

**The consultation on proposed early education and childcare changes closes at 5pm on Friday 3 July 2015.** A final decision on changes to these services is expected to be made by Camden Council's Cabinet on 22 July 2015.

**The consultation on proposed children's centre changes closes at 5pm on Friday 31 July 2015.** A final decision on changes to these services is expected to be made by Camden Council's Cabinet in Autumn 2015.

You can fill in one or both questionnaires (sections 1 and 2) in this consultation and post it back to us using the freepost address on the back page or hand it into your local children's centre.

Or you can complete the questions online at [camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart](https://camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart)

Responses to section 1 need to be returned by **5pm on Friday 3 July** and section 2 responses need to be with us by **5pm on Friday 31 July**.

## Section 1:

# Consultation on proposed changes to early education and childcare

The Council currently provides 127 'subsidised' childcare places for children under three years old at Council-run children's centres. We contribute towards the cost of them so that they are more affordable for families in Camden. These places are currently available to all parents, regardless of income.

We also have a legal duty to provide 15 hours a week of free early education and childcare to two year-old children from families with the lowest incomes. Research shows that these are the children who benefit the most from high quality early education and childcare. Under current arrangements, we are meeting our duty. However, we do not have enough places to provide every eligible child with a place, should their parents require it. We are working hard with other providers to continue to meet this duty as the number of parents/carers wishing to take up places increases.

There would be no changes to our early education and childcare offer for three and four year-olds and we are not proposing to reduce the 25 hour free offer of early education and childcare in Camden Council-run children's centres and schools. We have made this decision because we know that affordable early education and childcare helps parents, in particular mothers, to be able to work or to find work.

We want to balance the early education and childcare available to everyone with the places for those families who need them the most. We therefore propose to make the following changes, which would prioritise early education and childcare places for two year-olds from households with the lowest levels of income and deliver savings of £430,000.

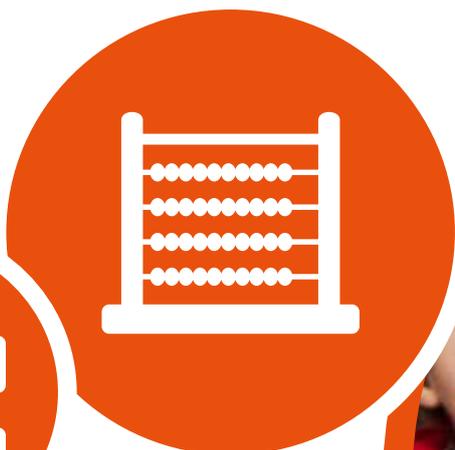
The proposed changes would not affect any child who already has an early education and childcare place provided by the Council – no places will be withdrawn and children would continue to have a place until they go to school.

### **Proposed changes to our early education and childcare offer for two year-olds:**

- We propose to increase the number of places which are available to children from low income families who are eligible to receive the national offer of 15 hours of free early education and childcare a week. We would also offer additional hours of subsidised early education and childcare between 8am and 6pm to these parents if they are working.
- If any of these places for two year-olds are not taken up we would offer the subsidised places to other low income families who are in receipt of housing benefit and working tax credit / child tax credit.
- This would mean that two year-old children from families who do not receive these benefits would no longer be able to receive a place at one of our children's centres. We would help parents to find alternative provision.

### **Proposed changes to our early education and childcare offer for children under two years old:**

- We would no longer provide early education and childcare places for children under two years old, but would help parents to find alternative provision.



- Children under two years old identified as children in need would receive early education and childcare from childminders.
- We would still provide children in need places in Council-run children's centres for two year-olds.

### Proposed changes to nursery meals

- We would continue to provide healthy meals in children's centres but make them more cost effective. This could mean meals are no longer prepared on site in children's centres.



### When we developed these proposals, we considered and rejected the following alternative proposals:

- Reducing the amount that we contribute towards subsidised childcare places, which would increase the cost of our places to parents. This is not our preferred approach, because we want to make sure our early education and childcare offer remains affordable to parents on the lowest incomes.
- Reducing the number of places provided to all age groups. This is not our preferred approach because we want to continue to support parents who want to work by offering 25 hours of early education and childcare for three and four year-olds. We also have a legal duty to provide a place for two years-olds who are eligible to receive 15 hours a week of free early education and childcare.



## Section 1 questions:

# Changes to early education and childcare

Please respond to these consultation questions by 5pm on Friday 3 July 2015

**Q1)** Do you have a child/ren who currently receives early education and childcare at a Camden children's centre?

Yes  No

**Q2)** Do you think your family will need an early education and childcare place at a Camden children's centre in the next few years?

Yes  No  Unsure

**Q3)** We propose to increase the number of free and subsidised early education and childcare places available to two year-olds from families on the lowest incomes. This would mean no longer providing places for two year-olds who are not eligible to receive 15 hours of free early education and childcare or whose families are not in receipt of housing benefit and working tax credits/child tax credits. We would give information to help parents to find alternative providers.

- Do you agree?
- Do you disagree?
- Do you have any other comments?

**Q4)** To create more places for two year-olds from families on the lowest incomes, we propose to no longer provide places in Council-run children's centres for children aged under two. We would give information to help parents find alternative providers.

- Do you agree?
- Do you disagree?
- Do you have any other comments?

**Q5)** If you are a parent or carer of a child under five years old, are you using or would you consider using a high quality Ofsted registered childminder?

Yes  No  Unsure

Do you have any other comments?

**Q6)** We would continue to provide healthy meals in children's centres but make them more cost effective. This could mean meals are no longer prepared on site in the children's centres.

- Do you agree?
- Do you disagree?
- Do you have any other comments?

**Q7)** Are there any comments that you would like to make about our proposed approach? Or do you have any alternative ideas for how we can make savings?

Please attach additional sheets if you need more space.

## Section 1 questions (continued):

# Changes to community nursery grants

### Proposed changes to community nursery grants

In Camden there are 25 nurseries which are run by voluntary and community sector organisations. We give seven community nursery grants to organisations (listed on pages 11 and 12) who run 10 of these nurseries. The other nurseries are run by organisations which don't receive community nursery grants from us. We propose to take a phased approach to ending community nursery grants, which would save £370,000. We would support these organisations to develop new business models and draw on national funding so that they can continue to provide nursery places.\*

\*Later in the year, there will be a separate process to engage and consult with the voluntary and community sector to generate ideas for developing a more strategic relationship with the sector to better meet the needs of residents. This includes looking at issues such as how the Council allocates funding to voluntary sector organisations and how we can better work together. Any changes the Council makes to community nursery grant funding will be considered alongside this consultation.

### When we developed these proposals, we considered and rejected the following alternative:

A reduction in the level of grant funding provided to voluntary and community sector organisations. This is not our preferred option because it would mean we would have less money to spend on providing early education and childcare places to children on the lowest incomes. We want to support organisations who have been receiving a grant to be able to develop new business models so that they can continue to provide nursery places. Other voluntary and community sector organisations in Camden are currently providing nursery places without any funding from us.

#### Q8)

- Do you agree with this proposal?
- Do you disagree with this proposal?
- Do you have any other comments?

Please attach additional sheets if you need more space.



## Section 2:

# Consultation on proposed changes to children's centre services (including drop-in / stay and play sessions)

Please respond to these consultation questions by 5pm on Friday 31 July 2015

We want to make sure that services we provide to children under five and their parents or carers meet their needs and are easily accessible. We are not proposing to close any of our children's centre buildings. We are proposing to build on the principles of the national Sure Start programme by working with local communities to make sure that high quality services are provided in places that are convenient for families. We also want to make sure that we continue to offer support to all families in the first few years of their child's life – so we have decided to continue to provide children's centre services to all children under five years old and their families.

But we think there is more we can do to make sure that the money we spend maximises the benefits for local families. To do this and to save £700,000 we are proposing to reorganise the way services are provided at Camden's 14 children's centres. This would mean a broader range of services, like health, employment and housing advice, would be available for families with young children at five lead Camden Sure Start Children's Centres. It is proposed that these centres are:

- Kilburn Grange Children's Centre
- Regent's Park Children's Centre
- Harmood Children's Centre
- Agar Children's Centre
- 1A Children's Centre.

The other nine children's centres would focus on providing early education and childcare places. They would continue to be part of the Camden Sure Start

network – so services such as drop-in / stay and play sessions could be delivered from these places if there was a local need.

These centres would work closely with the lead centres, primary schools and other service providers to help families access services that are important in their area.

Ofsted would still inspect the quality of early education and childcare in the nine centres but, as they would no longer provide other children's centre services, they wouldn't be inspected as a children's centre. This would save money and allow us to focus on creating a range of services at our five Camden Sure Start Lead Centres, which could also still be delivered from any of our buildings.

We would spend less on drop-in / stay and play sessions, but continue to invest £100,000 in providing high quality sessions. Changing the way we provide drop-in / stay and play sessions would mean that some sessions (listed at the end of this document) currently provided would no longer be available, but we would make sure that people could still access high quality drop-in / stay and play sessions in their local area.

### When we developed these proposals, we considered and rejected the following alternative proposals:

- Closing children's centre buildings. This is not our preferred option because we want to make sure that affordable / free high quality early education and childcare is easily accessible to those most in need. We also want to make sure that children's centre services such as drop-in / stay and play sessions continue to be available at all current children's centre buildings if there is a local need.
- Charging for drop-in / stay and play sessions. This is not our preferred option because these sessions often open doors to further support, and this would mean that families on the lowest incomes would not be able to access services.



## Section 2 questions:

# Changes to children's centre services

Please respond to these consultation questions by 5pm on Friday 31 July 2015

**Q1)** Are you registered with children's centre services?

- Yes  No  Unsure

**Q2)** Have you visited any of these children's centres within the last year, or do you think that you will visit any of these centres within the next few years?

- 1A Children's Centre  
 Agar Children's Centre  
 Harmond Children's Centre  
 Kilburn Grange Children's Centre  
 Regent's Park Children's Centre  
 Brecknock School Children's Centre  
 Coram's Fields Children's Centre  
 Edith Neville School Children's Centre  
 Gospel Oak Children's Centre  
 Hampden Children's Centre  
 Konstam Children's Centre  
 Langtry Children's Centre  
 Sidings Children's Centre  
 Thomas Coram Centre

**Q3)** We propose to develop a number of lead Camden Sure Start Children's Centres (the proposal is five), which would provide a range of health, education and other services for families with children under five years old?

- Do you agree?  
 Do you disagree?  
Do you have any other comments?

**Q4)** What services do you think it would be useful for the lead Camden Sure Start Children's Centres to provide?

**Q5)** We propose to focus on providing early education and childcare services from nine of our current children's centres. These centres would work closely with the lead centres, primary schools and other service providers to help families access services that are important in their area.

- Do you agree?  
 Do you disagree?  
Do you have any other comments?

**Q6)** We propose to change the way we currently provide drop-in / stay and play sessions (see list on pages 11 to 12). We would spend less on drop-in / stay and play sessions but continue to invest £100,000 in providing high quality sessions. This would mean that some sessions currently provided would no longer be available, but we would make sure that people could still access high quality drop-in / stay and play sessions in their local area.

- Do you agree?  
 Do you disagree?  
Do you have any other comments?

**Q7)** Are there any comments that you would like to make about our proposed approach? Or do you have any alternative ideas for how we can make savings?

Please attach additional sheets if you need more space.

## About you

**Q1)** Are you responding to this survey as a

- parent/carer of a child under 5 years old
- parent/carer of a child over 5 years old
- voluntary or community sector organisation
- other

**Q2)** We would be grateful if you could provide us with your postcode. We will only use it to analyse the responses to this survey and will not use it for any other purposes.

**Q3)** Gender

- Male
- Female

**Q4)** What is your age?

**Q5)** What is your ethnic group?

Please tick one box only

White

- English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- Irish
- Gipsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background  
(Please tick and write in box)

Mixed / multiple ethnic

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian

Any other mixed / multiple ethnic groups  
(Please tick and write in box)

Black or Black British

- Black or Black British
- Caribbean
- African

Any other Black / African / Caribbean background  
(Please tick and write in box)

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese

Any other Asian background  
(Please tick and write in box)

Other ethnic group

- Arab

Any other ethnic group

- Prefer not to say

**Q6)** Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

(i.e. that you have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day tasks)

**Q7)** Where did you hear about this consultation?

- Poster or flyer
- The Camden Magazine
- Camden website
- Your children's centre

Other (please say where):

If you would like to be kept informed about the outcome of this consultation please provide an email or postal address.

## Additional information

Organisations which currently receive a community nursery grant from the Council
Auden Place Nursery; Camden Chinese Community Nursery
Camden Community Nurseries (Sington/Montpelier); Collingham Gardens Nursery
Coram's Fields Nursery; PSLA (Pre-school Learning Alliance)
Somers Town Community Nursery

Drop-in sessions which the Council currently funds
Coram Parents Centre sessions on Mondays at 9.30am, Tuesdays at 9.30am and 1pm and Wednesdays at 9.30am
Dragon Hall sessions on Fridays at 10am
KIDS sessions - the 'Superstars' session held at 10am on Tuesdays at Harmood Children's Centre and 'Amazing Tots' at Cubitt Street on Thursdays at 10.30am
Queen's Crescent Community Association sessions at 10am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
Anna Freud Centre sessions, which are held at England's Lane Hostel at 1pm on Thursdays
Castlehaven Community Association sessions at 10am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
Kentish Town Community Centre sessions at 9.30am and 11am on Tuesdays, 10.30am on Wednesdays and 9.30am on Thursdays
Story Day on Mondays at 10am at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Dance and Drum on Tuesdays at 1.30pm at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Soft and Trikey on Wednesdays at 1.30pm at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Mabel's Monsters at 1.30pm on Thursdays at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Mabel's Minor Monsters at 1pm on Thursdays at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Baby Boost at 1.30pm on Thursdays at Highgate Newtown Community Centre
Konstam Children's Centre sessions at 10am on Wednesdays (provided by Highgate Newtown Community Centre)
Abbey Community Centre sessions at 10am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 10.45am on Wednesdays
Camden Somali Cultural Centre sessions at 10am on Fridays
Kingsgate Community Centre sessions at 10am on Mondays, and 1.30pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Sidings Community Centre sessions at 10am on Mondays and Thursdays and Kilburn Children's Centre at 9.30am and 11am on Wednesdays (run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance)
St Pancras Community Association sessions at 10am on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 1pm on Thursdays.
Camden Square sessions on Wednesdays at 10am and Fridays at 10am (run by Maiden Lane Community Centre)
Maiden Lane Community Centre sessions at 1.30pm on Wednesdays

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### Drop-in sessions which the Council currently funds (continued)

Adventure soft room with bouncy castle at Sidings Community Centre - sessions held at 10am and 12noon on Tuesdays

Little Kickers sessions at Coram's Fields on Mondays at 10am and 11am

Drop-in sessions at Coram's Fields on Mondays at 1pm, Tuesdays at 1pm and 2pm, Wednesdays at 1pm, Thursdays at 1pm and Fridays at 1pm

Creative play sessions at Edith Neville on Mondays at 9am

Mabel's Monsters (singing and rhymes) at Edith Neville on Tuesdays at 2.15pm

Toy Library at Edith Neville on Tuesdays at 3pm

Under-ones drop-in at Edith Neville on Wednesdays at 1.15pm

Stay and play drop-in sessions at Edith Neville on Fridays at 9am

Cook and Eat sessions at Brecknock Children's Centre on Mondays at 9am

Explore and Talk sessions for under-twos at Brecknock Children's Centre on Tuesdays at 9am

Singing and signing sessions for under-ones at Brecknock Children's Centre on Tuesdays at 11am

Mabel's Monsters sessions at Brecknock Children's Centre on Wednesdays at 9am

Drop-in sessions for under-fives at Brecknock Children's Centre on Thursdays and Fridays at 9am

If you would like an easy-read or large print version of this document, or need it to be translated into another language, please email [camdensurestart@camden.gov.uk](mailto:camdensurestart@camden.gov.uk)

Please send your response to the freepost address below:

**Strategy and Change Floor 5, 5PS  
Freepost RSLT-RJBR-TXAA  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
London  
WC1H 9JE**

Or hand it into any Camden children's centre.

We need your comments by:

- No later than **5pm on Friday 3 July 2015** for responses to questions on proposed changes to early education and childcare
- No later than **5pm on Friday 31 July 2015** for responses to questions on proposed changes to children's centre services.

Alternatively, you can complete the form online at [camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart](http://camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart)