

26 March 2020

Liberal Democrats call to halt the consultation on West Sussex Children and Family Centres following Government's new commitment to family hubs

Conservative led West Sussex County Council are currently consulting on proposed changes to its Early Help service which risk the closure of 32 Children and Family Centres and all Youth Centres. **Burgess Hill will be left with NO Children and Family Centres or Youth Centres** if these plans proceed, with services at The Gattons, Sidney West and Park Centre in Burgess Hill all slated for closure.

Yet yesterday the Conservative central government announced a review to "level up the support and care for the very youngest" with one priority area being "the government's commitment to champion family hubs, making them a place for families to access Start for Life services".

WSSC Councillor Kirsty Lord says "Liberal Democrats at WSSC proposed a plan in February to save Children and Family Centres from these cuts, but Conservative councillors including all of those in Mid Sussex voted against it. These facilities are crucial to local families to give their children the best start in life and the proposal to retain only one centre for the whole of Mid Sussex is not good enough. Now it looks like the chair of the Early Years Review, Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP, agrees with the Liberal Democrats'.

Mid Sussex Lib Dems today call on WSSC to cancel the current consultation, go back to the drawing board with its redesign proposals to secure the future of the Children and Family Centres and Youth Centres and engage with government to obtain the funding required to safeguard the centres for all local families.

WSSC Lib Dem candidate for Burgess Hill North Stuart Condie says "These proposed closures of the facilities at the Gattons, Sidney West and Park Centre would be another blow to Burgess Hill following the demolition of the Martlets. As the government review says, early years services should be **LEVELLED UP** not **DUMBED DOWN** for budgetary reasons so we are calling on WSSC for a complete rethink of this important issue".

ENDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

1. WSSC proposals <https://yourvoice.westsussex.gov.uk/early-help-redesign>
2. Government Review <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-review-to-improve-babies-and-childrens-healthy-development>
3. Photos of the Gattons and Sidney West centres attached.