


Children's Centre Childcare Consultation

 **Deadline for responses**
24 April 2024

Share your views:

 Visit bit.ly/childrens-centre or consultation.hackney.gov.uk
by **24 April 2024, 11:59pm**

Printed surveys and consultation proposals are available at your local children's centre.



Scan to
take part

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Please read the information provided below.

This gives background information and explains the proposals in more detail.

If you wish to comment on the proposals please do so by **24 April 2024, 11:59pm.**

Children's Centre Childcare Consultation

The Council proposes to make changes to the way some of its children's centres deliver nursery provision to children aged between 6 months and 5 years. These include the addition of a specialist provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

What are we consulting on?

- **Hillside Children's Centre:**

We propose to make changes to Hillside Children's Centre and for the centre to become an Additional Resource Provision (ARP) for early years. Hillside currently has 41 universal full time places for children aged 6 months to 5 years. We propose to make Hillside an Additional Resource Provision (ARP), a specialist nursery delivering term-time early education and care for children aged 2 to 5 years with special educational needs or a disability (SEND). 24 ARP places would be available to children with SEND. In addition to the ARP, 17 universal term-time places for children without SEND aged 2 to 5 years would be available for 38 weeks of the year. Paid for holiday places and wraparound care at the beginning and end of the day is also being proposed.

- **Oldhill Children's Centre:**

We propose to make changes to the services currently delivered at Oldhill Children's Centre. The centre currently has universal full time nursery provision for 60 children aged 6 months to 5 years and this would change to term time places for up to 60 children aged 6 months to 3 years. These places would be funded by the early years entitlement and fees. Additional paid for holiday and wrap-around care at the beginning and end of the day would also be available.

- **Fernbank Children's Centre:**

We propose to invite alternative providers to take over the management of Fernbank Children's Centre. If a suitable alternative provider cannot be found by Autumn 2024, we propose to close Fernbank Children's Centre by August 2025.

- **Sebright Children's Centre:**

We propose to invite alternative providers to take over the management of Sebright Children's Centre. If a suitable alternative provider cannot be found by Autumn 2024, we propose to close Sebright Children's Centre by August 2025.

Background and context

Hackney Education commissioned an independent review of the nursery provision provided by 11 children's centres (Ann Tayler, Clapton Park, Mapledene, Woodberry Down, Hillside, Fernbank, Oldhill, Lubavitch, Sebright, Linden and Comberton). These 11 children's centres are currently funded by the Council to subsidise the cost of childcare, making it more affordable for parents who are able to access these nurseries.

This means that, no matter their household income, all parents of children who attend the 11 children's centres receive subsidised childcare.

We commissioned Ernst & Young (EY) to deliver the review and identify ways to achieve financial stability for the 11 children's centres, identify opportunities for savings, and to explore the impact of the proposed national government reform of funded early years entitlement (2024/2025).

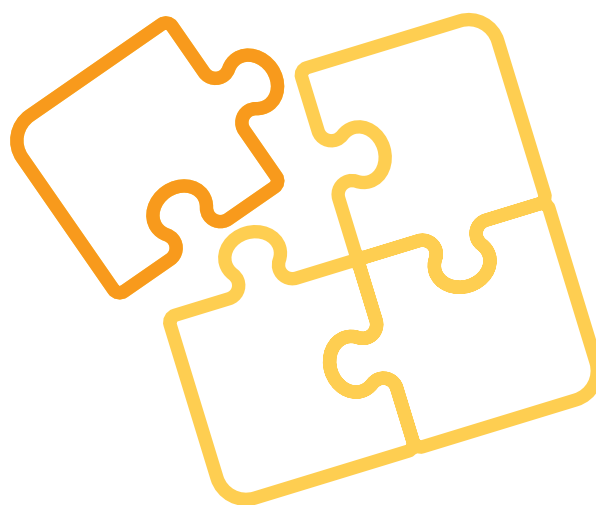
The review took place from April to June 2023 and identified how the Local Authority could deliver childcare differently to become more efficient, and financially sustainable in the future, taking into account the current £1.07m deficit across the centres.

The Council's financial planning has identified a funding gap of £57m savings required across the Council by 2026/2027. The service needs to deliver £1.1m in savings in 2024/25, a further £1m in 2025/26 and further savings of up to £1.9m in 2026/27.

The independent review found that the current model of provision is not financially sustainable. EY identified 10 opportunities that could be used to make the service more sustainable. The opportunities were grouped into three categories: reducing expenditure, increasing income, and redefining the model.

The review did not include children's centre nurseries that are not funded by the Council and do not offer subsidised childcare (Morningside, Gainsborough, Minik Kardes, Ihsan, Daubeney, Comet Nursery School and Wentworth Nursery School.) The 5 non-Council funded children's centres and 2 nursery schools, provide early education and, or childcare funded by the Early Years Funded Entitlement for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds, and charge fees at market rate.

We previously consulted on proposals to close two children's centres in the north of the borough in 2021. During the 2021 consultation, parents asked us to consider inviting alternative providers to take over management of children's centres before proposing to close centres. This request from parents has shaped our current proposals. The 2021 consultation was paused to allow wider public engagement into the provision of childcare.




Since the paused consultation in 2021 the Council:

- Established an independent Commission into Affordable Childcare, to explore how to achieve better access to affordable high quality early years provision in Hackney. The Commission brought together parents and carers, childcare providers, and other members of the local communities, who looked at local childcare provision, challenges, risks, and costs, as well as ways to maximise the support available for families in the borough. The findings of the Commission align with the findings of the children's centre review. The Hackney Commission's report can be accessed here

 bit.ly/Affordable-Childcare-Commission

- Commissioned an independent review of Children's Centres. The findings have informed these proposals. You can access the report here:

 education.hackney.gov.uk/content/childrens-centres-consultation-2024

- Began developing four Children & Family Hubs in the borough, offering integrated family support services to meet families' social care, education, mental and physical health needs. As part of this work, the Council was selected to receive £3.9m funding over 3 years from the Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care for a Start for Life programme, included in the hubs, which focuses on supporting the first 1001 days of a child's life, from conception to age two. This programme will focus on services for new parents and their babies and young children, such as perinatal mental health and parenting support, parent infant relationships, infant feeding, early language and home learning advice. The hubs have been designated following a consultation in the summer of 2023. You can find the results of this here

 bit.ly/cfh-hackney



Central Government expansion of funded childcare for working parents

In March 2023, the government announced the expansion of funded childcare for working parents. From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare. From September 2024, 15 hours of funded childcare will be extended to include all children from the age of 9 months for working parents. From September 2025, working parents of children aged 9 months and over will be entitled to 30 hours childcare per week right up to their child starting school.¹

Due to the expansion of funded childcare for working parents, we will replace the Council subsidy to children's centres with:



the expanded 15 hours funded early years entitlement to:

- 2 year olds in working households from April 2024, and
- babies aged 9 months in working households from September 2024.



the expanded 30 hours funded entitlement to

- all children from 9 months old in eligible working households from September 2025.

In preparation for the expansion of the government childcare entitlement for working parents, we assessed our childcare places to confirm that we have enough places for children to take up their funded entitlement in April. We know that the new funding rates from the government will be more generous than the current funding rates which may help to make the centres more financially sustainable in the short term. However, this funding could be reduced in future years.

Why are we consulting?

We are consulting service users, staff and anyone who could be affected, on proposals to make changes to the way some of our children's centres deliver nursery provision in the future. These changes have been proposed to improve the sustainability of the centres. If we do not make changes, the current deficit of £1.07m across the children's centres is likely to continue to increase and we might have to make more far-reaching proposals at a later date. By making decisions now, even if they are unpopular, we aim to deliver an effective and efficient early education and childcare service, with centres that can retain a high level of occupancy.

The consultation gives service users and staff an opportunity to share their views and shape the proposals further. The views of service users and staff will influence the proposed changes to Oldhill Children's Centre, the shaping of Hillside ARP, and inform the types of provider that should be invited to apply to manage Fernbank and Sebright Children's Centres, if this proposal is taken forward.

We engaged EY through the Council's Management Consultancy Framework to undertake an independent review of the Children's Centres. The intention of the review was to:

- identify solutions to achieve sustainability impacted by £1.07m budget deficit from a reduction in nursery fees in the last few years, and increased operational cost,
- identify opportunities to meet the £4m savings factored into the Council's mid-term financial plans; and
- provide an opportunity to examine the potential impact of the national early years reform to expand the 15 and 30 hours funded early years entitlement to working parents.

1. The Education Hub – Free childcare: How we are tackling the cost of childcare bit.ly/cost_of_childcare

EY worked with the children centres managers, school leaders, and stakeholders representing children in need and those with SEND over a 10-week period to understand the current service, how this could be improved and whether there are opportunities to remodel the provision.

The review identified that the current model for delivering childcare provision is not financially sustainable based on the current fees and expenditure. It found that even if the centres were at 100 % occupancy, and fully occupied by families on the highest fee band (Band 5, that is those on an income of at least £100k) they would still not be financially self-sustaining.

EY looked at the national expansion of the funded early years entitlement due to be implemented in April 2024, and found that its implementation could increase nursery income by up to £5m by 2025/26, which could reduce the current level of subsidy of £6.7m. However, it also found that the funded places will not fully meet the cost of the provision if we do not take steps to make the service more efficient by reducing costs.



The estimated income from the expanded funded early years entitlement is dependent on:

- Receiving an adequate early years entitlement funding formula from the government to cover the full cost of the service next year and in coming years. The current funding from the government does not meet service costs.
- Full occupancy of the centres is critical to achieving the required income to meet running costs. Only 4 of the 11 centres are currently reaching full occupancy: Lubavitch, Ann Tayler, Clapton Park and Mapledene. Their high occupancy rates are attributed to their ability to manage their admission register and the popularity of these centres.

Occupancy at children’s centres has been impacted by a reduction in the 0–4 population, down from 20,375 children in 2018 to 18,840 children 2022/23. The decline in the 0–4 population is projected to further dip to 18,389 between 2026/27 and 2030/31.²

We have 500 surplus nursery places in schools, and over 600 surplus places in reception classes (21 % surplus). To reduce the reception surplus the Cabinet decided to close 4 schools in Hackney by September 2024, removing 105 places and reducing the reception surplus to 17 % by 2029 (based on current projections).

2. Further information can be accessed on ons.gov.uk population estimates: bit.ly/population-mid-2020

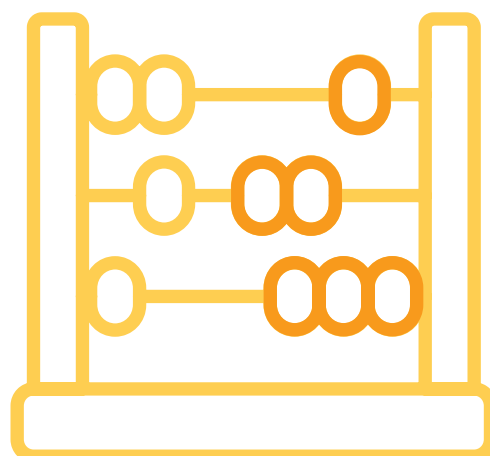
Proposed changes to Children’s Centres

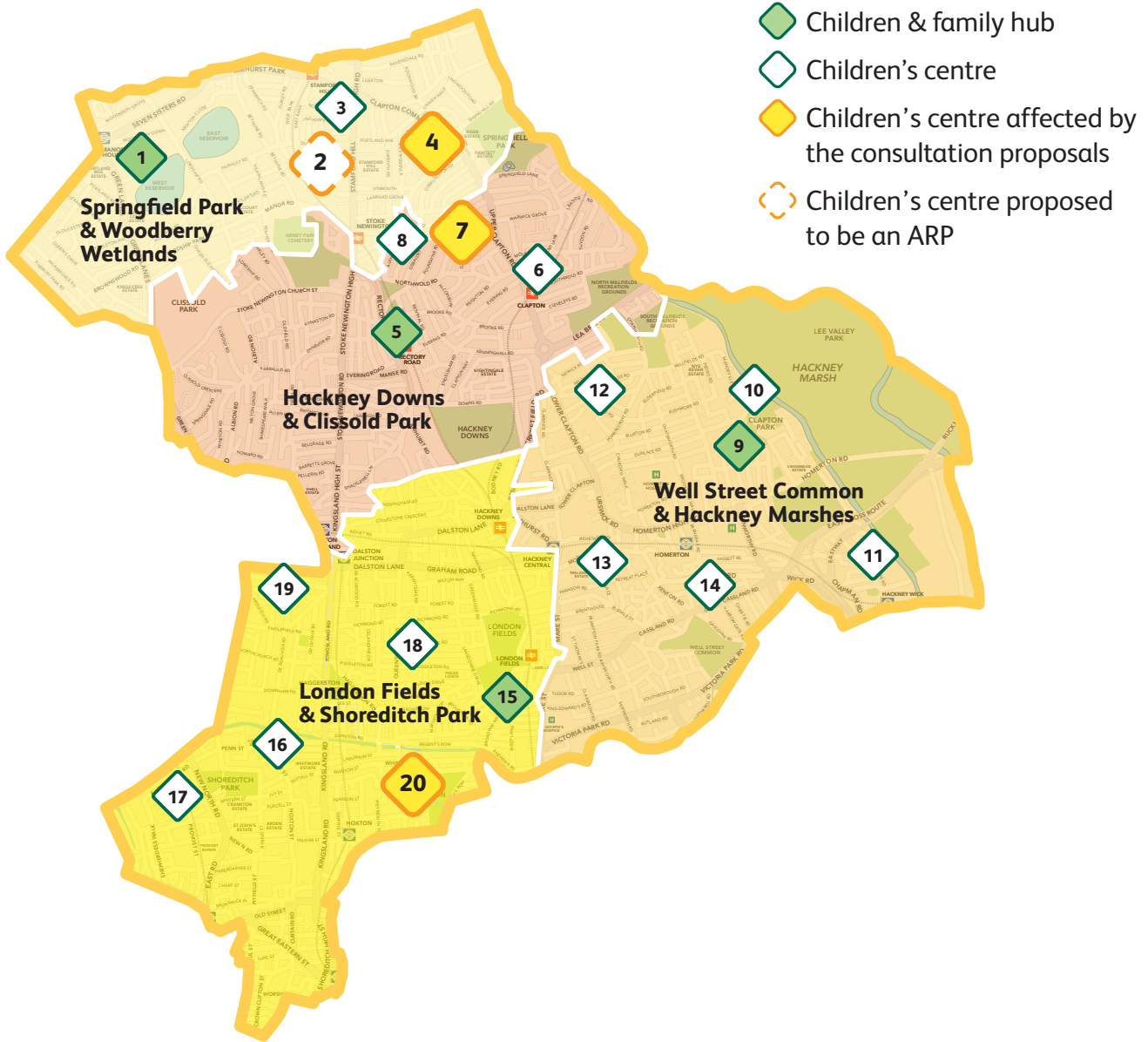
The proposed changes aim to rationalise children’s centres in order to secure sustainability into the future and meet the needs of children in Hackney. This includes the proposal to provide a much needed new specialist provision for children with SEND.

Current children’s centre and nursery provision

Neighbourhoods area	Springfield Park and Woodberry Wetlands	Clissold Park and Hackney Downs	London Fields and Shoreditch Park	Well Street Community and Hackney Marsh
Designated children and family hubs (*full time subsidised childcare x 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodberry Down* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linden* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Taylor* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daubeney
Satellite children’s centre nurseries (full time subsidised childcare x 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hillside • Oldhill • Lubavitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fernbank • Comberton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapledene • Sebright 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clapton Park
Satellite children’s centres – nurseries not subsidised		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ihsan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minik Kardes • Comet Nursery School, ARP and Children’s Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gainsborough • Morningside • Wentworth Nursery School and Children’s Centre
Satellite children’s centre – no nursery	–	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comet@ Thomas Fairchild 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millfields

Total number of settings:				
Neighbourhoods area	Springfield Park and Woodberry Wetlands	Clissold Park and Hackney Downs	London Fields and Shoreditch Park	Well Street Community and Hackney Marsh
Private nurseries (including children's centres)	22 (including 4 children's centres)	36 (including 3 children's centres)	23 (including 4 children's centres)	15 (including 5 children's centres)
Playgroup	4	2	1	4
Independent schools with nurseries	16	2	1	0
Childminders	32	36	32	34
Maintained nursery schools	–	–	1	1
Maintained primary schools with nursery classes	8	15	15	14
Primary free schools and academies with nursery classes	1	2	1	–
Total settings	83	93	74	68





**Neighbourhoods area
Springfield Park & Woodberry Wetlands**

- 1. Woodberry Down Children & Family Hub
- 2. Hillside Children's Centre
- 3. Lubavitch Children's Centre
- 4. Oldhill Children's Centre

**Neighbourhoods area
Well Street Common & Hackney Marshes**

- 9. Daubeny Children & Family Hub
- 10. Clapton Park Children's Centre
- 11. Gainsborough Children's Centre
- 12. Millfields Children's Centre
- 13. Morningside Children's Centre
- 14. Wentworth Nursery School & Children's Centre

**Neighbourhoods area
Hackney Downs & Clissold Park**

- 5. Linden Children & Family Hub
- 6. Comberton Children's Centre
- 7. Fernbank Children's Centre
- 8. Ihsan Children's Centre

**Neighbourhoods area
London Fields & Shoreditch Park**

- 15. Ann Tayler Children & Family Hub
- 16. Comet Nursery School & Children's Centre
- 17. Comet at Thomas Fairchild
- 18. Mapledene & Queensbridge Children's Centre
- 19. Minik Kardes Community Nursery
- 20. Sebright Children's Centre

Proposed service

Neighbourhoods area	Springfield Park and Woodberry Wetlands	Clissold Park and Hackney Downs	London Fields and Shoreditch Park	Well Street Community and Hackney Marsh
Maintain full day care 0–5yrs at 8 centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodberry Down Children and Family Hub (9 new places for babies) • Lubavitch • Oldhill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linden Children and Family Hub • Comberton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Tayler Children and Family Hub • Mapledene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clapton Park
Maintain non-Council funded children’s centres nurseries and nursery schools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ihsan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minik Kardes • Comet Nursery School, ARP and Children’s Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gainsborough • Morningside • Daubeney Children and Family Hub • Wentworth Nursery School and Children’s Centre
Restructure by 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hillside (41 places) Develop into ARP for children with special needs, maintaining mainstream places for 2, 3 and 4 yr olds to access early years entitlement • Oldhill (60 places) Maintain places for vulnerable children with market rate places for children 0–3 yrs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fernbank (60 places) Explore alternative provider, close if unsuccessful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sebright (45 places) Explore alternative provider, close if unsuccessful 	

Hillside Children's Centre: Proposal to change Hillside Children's Centre into an early years Additional Resource Provision (ARP).

Hillside Children's Centre is well placed to be developed into an early years Additional Resource Provision for children with special educational needs. We are proposing to change it into an ARP because it is a suitable size and location to meet need in the north of the borough. The proposal to develop an ARP is part of the SEND Strategy. Respondents to the Children and Family Hubs consultation last summer, requested more support for children with SEND; restructuring Hillside aims to meet the need for more SEND support.

Transition into an ARP would begin in September 2024 at the earliest, but will not be fully completed until September 2025. ARP's must be managed by a school in order to draw down funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The ARP would therefore be attached to a school with significant experience in managing effective early years provision.

A cohort of children will leave to go to school and will be unaffected by the changes. 24 term time places would be available for 2, 3 and 4 year olds with SEND, and 17 term time universal places would remain for 2, 3 and 4 year olds without SEND. Wraparound care would be available at the start and end of the day, alongside holiday provision.

The baby room may be retained in the short term for existing children to support transition from the children's centre into an ARP, until the children turn 2 years, to prevent disruption to the youngest children. However, we propose not to retain baby places in the long term and this will mean the loss of baby places. Children who are unable, or do not wish to retain a place at Hillside, would be supported to find a place at an alternative setting.



Oldhill Children's Centre: Proposal to restructure Oldhill Children's Centre to provide early education and care to children 6 months to 3 years old.

Currently, Oldhill Children's Centre offers 60 full-time places for children aged 6 months to 5 years. We are proposing to move to term-time places available to children aged 6 months to 3 years. Families would be able to pay for wrap-around care at the beginning and end of the day and for holiday provision. This is a significant change to the current all year provision and will impact current and future families.

Children in need of support would continue to be funded to access places through the current early help system that is managed via the family support teams. 4 year olds would apply for a funded early years entitlement place in Oldhill School, or at an alternative school.

The proposals would not affect children who are currently enrolled at Oldhill. We would phase out places for 4 year olds; children at Oldhill would continue to access the nursery until they leave. The phasing out of places for 4 year olds is likely to impact future families who would be required to apply for a place at a school nursery class before their child's 4th birthday, and would need to take up that place at the September or January intake. It is not unusual for children to leave their early years setting at 3 ½ years to take up a place in a school nursery class.



Proposals related to Fernbank Children's Centre and Sebright Children's Centre

We recognise the impact of these proposals on children and their families and will commit to supporting families through the process as much as is possible. Each centre will be allocated an officer to work closely with them to identify the needs of parents and carers, identify vacant places and help find a place in an alternative setting.

Fernbank Children's Centre: Proposals to invite expressions of interest from alternative providers to manage Fernbank Children's Centre and if an alternative provider is not found, to close the centre.

We propose to close the centre, unless an alternative provider can be found by Autumn 2024 to take over its management by 2025. We intend to invite expressions of interest from alternative providers to manage Fernbank Children's Centre. This process will follow the Council's procurement tender process advertising the opportunity, and inviting expressions of interest. Staff and service users would be kept informed of the outcome of the tender process. The chosen provider would be expected to deliver places with market fees.

If an alternative provider cannot be secured by Autumn the centre will be closed. The staff consultation process would commence with a view to closing the centre by August 2025 to support transition of existing children to new settings at key transition points.

This process would be managed through the Council's procurement framework and staff and service users would be kept informed of the outcome of the tender process.

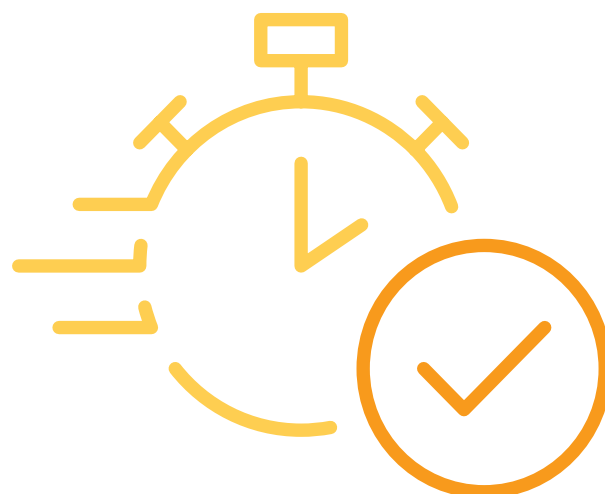
Sebright Children's Centre: Proposals to invite expressions of interest from alternative providers to manage Sebright Children's Centre and if an alternative provider is not found, to close the centre.

We propose to close the centre, unless an alternative provider can be found by Autumn 2024 to take over its management by 2025. We intend to invite expressions of interest from alternative providers to manage Sebright Children's Centre. This process will follow the Council's procurement tender process advertising the opportunity, and inviting expressions of interest. Staff and service users would be kept informed of the outcome of the tender process. The chosen provider would be expected to deliver places with market fees.

If an alternative provider cannot be secured by Autumn 2024, the centre will be closed. The staff consultation process would commence with a view to closing the centre by August 2025 to support transition of existing children to new settings at key transition points. This process would be managed through the Council's procurement framework and staff and service users would be kept informed of the outcome of the tender process.

Proposed timeline

Date	Event
31 January – 24 April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 week consultation
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation report will be published. • Feedback on the consultation will be considered by Cabinet.
April – September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national expansion of the funded early years entitlement will begin. • At this point, the current childcare subsidy would start to be reduced and replaced by the funded early years entitlement.
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin tender process for Sebright and Fernbank Children’s Centres, after Cabinet decision.
Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a new provider, if found. • If unable to find an alternative provider, staff consultation on proposals to close the centre (s) would begin.
Summer 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close centre(s)
September 2024 – September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure Hillside to form an ARP, working towards transition to the new service from September 2024 to full implementation by September 2025. • Restructure of Oldhill Children’s centre, with full implementation by September 2025



How were the children's centres included in the proposals selected?

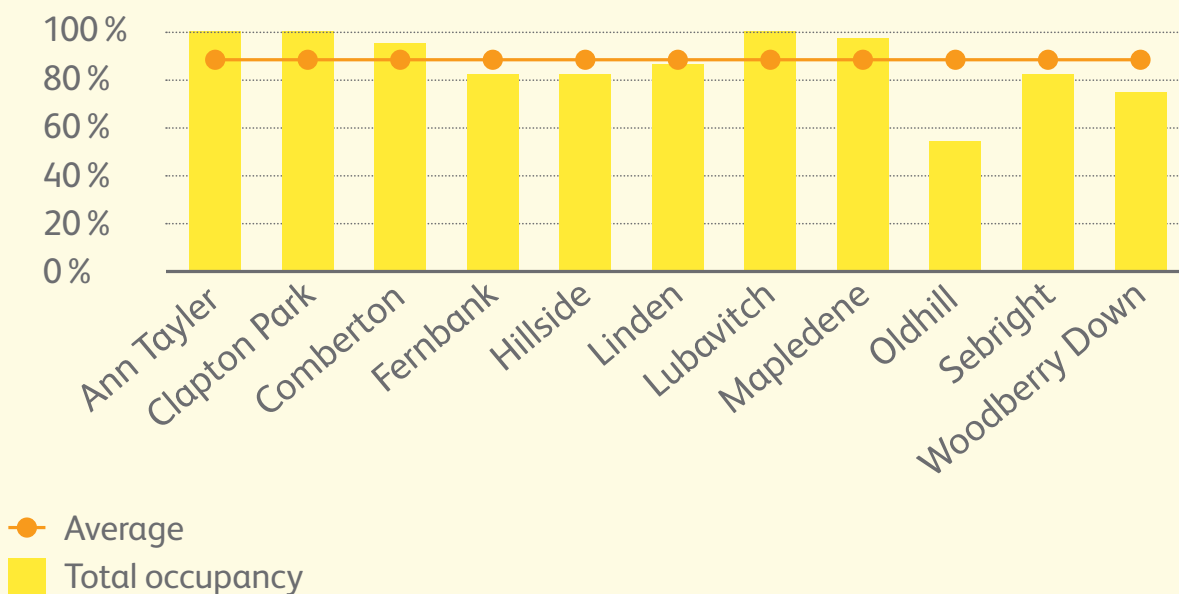
In the independent review, 5 centres were identified by the review as operating below the average 88% occupancy:

1. Oldhill
2. Hillside
3. Fernbank
4. Sebright, and
5. Woodberry Down

These Centres were looked at in more detail to understand the families who were accessing the nursery, and the challenges experienced by the leadership team in running the provision.

Three centres – Oldhill, Hillside and Fernbank – are in very close proximity. Making significant changes to all three centres presented a risk to having sufficient childcare places in the locality. The options were based on working towards maintaining sufficient provision to support children's outcomes, and to enable parents to work. Reducing the childcare provision will reduce surplus places and support the remaining children's centres to optimise occupancy.

Total average occupancy 2022/23



1. Oldhill Children's Centre

Oldhill supports marginalised, low income families who would benefit most from joined up services delivered as part of the school and children's centre. 71 % children are of Black and global majority heritage, 39 % assessed as being in need, 1 % are above average income. Maintaining the children's centre, and rationalising cost by changing the age range and configuration of places would sustain both the children's centre and the school where the children's centre is co-located by removing surplus places. The proposed changes would enable the Centre to continue to support children from marginalised communities, those in need, and those from lower income households with a yet to be defined number of places for higher income families to maintain a social economic mix and income levels. The decision on the number of places will be made following the consultation. Removing places for 4 year olds adds flexibility to increase places for younger children should they be needed. The subsidy is proposed to continue to be used to support the most disadvantaged children, alongside places for higher income families. The Effective Provision of Preschool Education study, found that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality preschool experiences, especially when they are educated with a mixture of children from different social and economic backgrounds.³

2. Hillside Children's Centre

Hillside is well located in the Stamford Hill area, in a suitable size building owned by the Council to develop into an ARP. 66 % children are of Black and global majority heritage, 24 % assessed as being in need, 12 % above average income. Term-time SEND and universal places would continue to be maintained to meet early education, SEND and childcare needs.

3. Fernbank Children's Centre

Fernbank is located in a building that is not owned by the Council. This carries the risk of a potentially unaffordable lease, which has been subject to ongoing negotiation over a number of years. 39 % children are of Black and global majority heritage, 10 % assessed as being in need, 44 % above average income. The proposal presents an opportunity for an alternative provider to take over this provision and negotiate a lease. If an alternative provider is not found, it is proposed that the centre will close. In the event that it is closed, the Council is satisfied that there are sufficient surplus places locally, within the wider sector, for children who can no longer access it. Vacancies across the childcare sector will continue to be monitored to ensure that the Council continues to meet its duty to ensure that there are sufficient places.

3. The study can be accessed here: The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project bit.ly/eppe_project

4. Sebright Children's Centre

Sebright is located on the border with Tower Hamlets and attracts out of borough families. It is in close proximity to Mapledene Children's Centre which is at full capacity in comparison. 46 % children are of Black and global majority heritage, 12 % assessed as being in need, 40 % are above average income. The proposal presents an opportunity for an alternative provider to take over this provision. If an alternative provider is not found, it is proposed that the centre will close. In the event that it is closed, the Council is satisfied that there are sufficient surplus places within the wider sector that parents could access. Vacancies across the childcare sector will continue to be monitored to ensure that the Council continues to meet its duty to ensure that there are sufficient places.

5. Woodberry Down Family Hub

Woodberry Down Family Hub is the only maintained nursery offering full day care in the far north of the borough, and supports a significant number of families living in hostels and temporary accommodation.

The Council has been working with Berkeley Homes property developers towards a timeline since 2014 to relocate the existing Children's Centre Lilliput building to fit in with the wider regeneration programme to transform one of the most deprived areas, into a new sustainable neighbourhood that offers high quality new homes, and economic opportunities. The new nursery extension was completed in August 2023.

Phase 2 of the extension is due to be completed in March 2024. 9 new baby places have been created and efficiency measures such as changing the way the admissions register is managed, and how part time places are allocated to minimise unoccupied places, have already commenced as part of its new Children and Family Hub status.




<https://news.hackney.gov.uk/first-two-children--family-hubs-open-their-doors-in-hackney/>

The recent capital investment means that closure is not an option for the regeneration of the area.

In addition to the proposed restructuring, the Council will consider opportunities to:

- Reduce the use of agency staff, therefore providing better value for money and improving the consistency of care
- Facilitate more efficient and effective building maintenance, by streamlining costs
- Improve budget management and governance with improved systems.
- Target the use of Council childcare subsidy to support low income, disadvantaged and vulnerable children to access provision at children's centres.

How to take part

You can share your views by completing the online survey at  bit.ly/childrens-centre or consultation.hackney.gov.uk

Paper surveys are available at your local children's centre.

The consultation will close on **24 April 2024, 11:59pm.**

If you need any information on this website in a different format please email

 consultation@hackney.gov.uk

We'll consider your request and get back to you within 5 working days.

Who do we need to hear from?

We welcome views from all residents. We would particularly like to hear from parents and carers of children who use children's centres and future users of children's centres, and professionals who support families.

What happens next?

We welcome all views and comments on the consultation proposals. No decision will be made on the proposals until after the consultation has closed. All responses to the consultation will be taken into consideration.

The responses to the consultation will be analysed, reported and shared on public platforms. The final decision on the proposals will be made by the Cabinet in Summer 2024.



