



6th March 2019

Dear Councillor Brathwaite,

As a local resident and as a campaigner and advocate for Children and young people, I am dismayed by Lambeth Council's proposals to close 5 of the Borough's Children's Centres and reduce provision at a further 7. I am writing to you in support of the Lambeth Liberal Democrats request that:

- the Council maintains the current levels of provision
- all Centres remain open
- the Council guarantees Children's Centre funding at the existing level for five years

Children's Centres let children and carers play and socialise side-by-side regardless of age, qualification, income, class or ethnicity. With the rise of mental health and depression issues, this is more important than ever as it brings the people of our borough together, especially the vulnerable. It allows people to share their concerns and they combat isolation in new parents and reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness.

Over the years I have supported these types of Children's Centres across the country and opened several of them. These are the reasons why I passionately believe that the Council's proposals compromise the ability of parents in Lambeth to access services which makes an enormous difference to the whole family's well-being. Another important fact to take into consideration is that fewer Children's Centres would have to serve the same number of families. This will hugely overstretch services, cause undue stress to staff, and reduce the quality of provision.

It is also well-documented that Children's Centres can be an early warning indicator in the fight against domestic abuse and violence, playing a role as a vital source of refuge and emotional support. As with so many things, prevention reduces the pressure elsewhere in the system. This is being put at risk in Lambeth with these proposals.

In a borough that suffers from unacceptably high levels of child poverty, with many families struggling to cope on a daily basis, we need to place compassion and aspiration at the heart of policy-making. The proposed cuts to children's centres will hurt the most vulnerable members of our community – we **must all** do better for them.

Therefore, I urge you to reconsider your proposals and I hope you will find a way to give Lambeth's Children the start in life that they deserve. I would very much like to meet with you to discuss this important and urgent matter further, please can you let me know when we might do this.

I look forward to hearing from you soon

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Keep smiling Floella'.

Baroness Floella Benjamin, OBE DL

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