

# Bexley Children's Centre reconfiguration 2021

## Frequently asked questions

### **Q. Is it true that there will only be five children's centres in Bexley?**

It is proposed that we would have five children's centres remaining in Bexley and that a Children's Centre Operational Lead will co-ordinate the provision and support of services at a range of additional community venues across the borough, we refer to this as 'outreach'

### **Q. What community venues will be used, and will these be as good as my local children's centre?**

Children's centres already use some community venues such as libraries, village halls and other community spaces. Staff check that such venues are suitable and safe for the activity being provided and this would continue to be a task for Children's Centre Team. Families have indicated in recent consultations that they want to be able to easily access services and value the story time sessions run from our libraries.

### **Q. Will the new service offer the same range of activities and support currently available in children's centres?**

The new service will provide access to the same activities already being delivered and that we know families value but may be delivered in a different way. We are proposing that the Children's Centres work alongside community groups and universal services, such as health visitors, midwives and child care settings so that families can access the activities they want but from a range of providers, not just a children's centre.

This means we can provide new additional services to families who may need extra help beyond that offered in local community groups particularly for expectant mothers and families with children up to the age of 2. It also allows us to support those children who are not taking up a free childcare place to take part in activities that mean they are ready for school.

**Q. How will the proposed service reach parents and families who need support?**

At the moment families receiving targeted support do so as a result of a referral, with their consent, from their Health Visitor, Midwife, local school etc. This will still continue but we know in Bexley where children experience more disadvantage and we would want the new service to focus on those areas in addition to the range of universal services that offer support to every family.

**Q. Will I have to pay for activities that I currently access at my local children's centre?**

Activities and group sessions provided by Children's Centres and targeted at families who need extra help will continue to be free. Some universal provision delivered by the private, voluntary sector and faith groups may charge fees as is currently the case for some of the universal play activities offered in our centres.

**Q. Will I have to go online to get information and advice – what happens if I want to speak to a real person or have no internet access?**

Whilst we want to ensure there is a better online and digital offer for families through joining up some of the existing ways to access information and advice, we recognise that families still want to speak to people. Children's Centre staff will be available to signpost and support access to services in person through a variety of outreach sessions and at our centres.

**Q. Will I have to travel to one of the proposed 5 children's centres to access support and services?**

No – the aim is to bring the services out to you and your family, making use of local spaces that you can easily access as well as supporting you at home where this is helpful or necessary. We are not suggesting families will have to travel to the main centre to get the support they need. Families living close to the centre would be able to access some of the support they need onsite, alongside the outreach support.

**Q. What are universal services and what does that mean?**

Universal services means services that are open to everyone. In children's centres this means all children have access to a range of 'universal' services depending on how old they are, their stage of development and their individual needs.

Universal services are provided by several different agencies, including health and education. So, Health Visitors, Midwives, Nurses GP's etc.

The children's centres offer a range of universal services such as stay and plays, parent and toddler groups etc these are all examples of services that everyone can attend.