

# Kent Children's Centres

Frequently  
Asked  
Questions



# Frequently Asked Questions

## What are children's centres and why are they being developed?

Children's centres are places or services offering young children and their families childcare, health, family and support services. How these services are delivered will vary for different areas. Services are either delivered from a children's centre building or in other cases via community venues such as the local library, health centre or village hall.

The introduction of Every Child Matters outlined the concept of integrated services for early years as part of the drive to improve effectiveness of services for all children. Children's centres have built on the practice and ideas of Sure Start Local Programmes, which were established in the most deprived parts of the country; these programmes have now been superseded by children centres.

The delivery of quality, fully inclusive and accessible services to all is of the highest importance with the needs of the local community being taken into consideration at all times. Parental participation and influence in service delivery is paramount.

## What are the aims of the children's centres programme?

The principle aim is to significantly improve outcomes for all children through the creation of seamless services focusing on health, education and support with an emphasis on early intervention and preventative work. This is by providing good quality services that will have a broad and lasting impact on children, their parents and the wider community

Children's centres will contribute towards:

- the best start in life for every child
- better opportunities for parents
- stronger and safer communities

This is not a new concept and children's centres are about building on existing good practice, rather than starting afresh. A significant number of families with young children already benefit from local services, children's centres enhance these services and extend the benefits to more families, bringing a joined up approach to service delivery to areas where it is most needed.



## Where will children's centres be based and how many children will benefit?

By 2011 there will be children's centre services available in every community in Kent and 81,600 children aged 0–5 years old will benefit from the development of children's centres.

## What services will be provided in children's centres?

Each children's centre will cater for the needs of the local community so services may vary but will include:

- Family and parenting support and outreach to parents, including those with English as an additional language
- Drop in sessions for parents and children
- Information around early education, childcare choices including childminding and children starting school
- Ante-natal classes and baby clinics
- Information and advice about parenting and child and family health services such as breastfeeding and speech and language
- Crèche facilities for children whose parents/carers are attending training or parenting support sessions



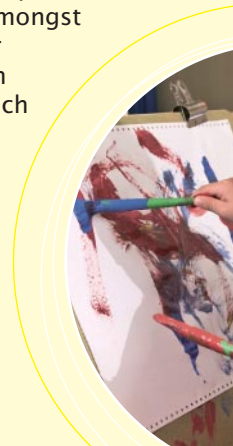
- Encouragement and support for parents thinking about returning to education, training or finding a new job
- Services for children with disabilities and children with additional needs
- Links with voluntary agencies and community groups
- Links with local schools

## What is the Kent Children's Trust?

The Kent Children's Trust (KCT) brings together social care, health, police, education and other services to improve the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people in Kent from birth to 19.

## Who is responsible for delivering the children's centre programme?

Kent has 23 Local Children's Service Partnerships (LCSPs), which are the local "arms" of KCT. Amongst other things, each LCSP has responsibility for delivering the children's centre agenda. Each centre will work to a local advisory board which in turn is responsible to the LCSP; these boards include representatives from the voluntary and statutory sector and parents from the local community.



## How will centres be governed and managed, especially if located on a school site?

Day to day co-ordination of the centre will be the responsibility of a Children's Centre Manager, usually employed by Kent County Council. Each centre will have a local advisory board which could include a headteacher or school governor; the arrangements for this will be different in each LSCP. Children's centre governance will not usually be directly linked to school governing bodies.

## Can all parents access the services or do they have to live within a certain area?

Children's centre services can be accessed by any family who has children under school age. Families will usually go to their closest centre but are able to attend the centre which best meets their needs. The final stages of the children's centre programme will ensure that all families with children under 5 have access to services by 2011.

## Are children's centres run by social services?

The services that are provided by the children's centres will be those from a range of agencies that provide the services for the local community.



Some activities may be organised by social services, but children's centres are not run by any of the agencies that provide services.

## How will children's centre provision develop in rural areas?

How children centre services will be delivered in rural areas will depend on the location. This could be a children's centre acting as a hub for health and other services serving the reach area, or using community venues.

## Who are the key partnering agencies in children's centre developments?

Key partners are linked to the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and may include health visitors, midwives, speech and language therapists and school nurses. There are links with the voluntary sector including organisations such as Home Start and Community Voluntary Services (CVS), the National Childminding Association and Jobcentre Plus.



### **Are children's centre staff qualified?**

All children's centre staff, including any nursery staff, are suitably qualified and have Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.

### **How are childminders involved?**

All children's centre services must provide support to childminders in the area, for example by providing shared training opportunities, hosting drop-in sessions and loan of toys and equipment.

### **How are extended schools services linked to children's centres?**

Extended services for schools and children's centres have similar requirements such as supporting parents, so there are opportunities for joint delivery and developing services that complement each other. Extended Schools Co-ordinators and Children's Centre Managers will work together to maximise these opportunities.

### **What is the Kent Children & Families Information Service?**

The Kent Children & Families Information Service (CFIS) provides free, impartial advice and guidance to parents/carers about childcare, parenting and other related services. Members of the team regularly visit children's centres, so parents/carers can drop in or make an appointment to discuss their individual needs.

### **How do children's centres help parents back into work or training?**

Children's centres link with Jobcentre Plus to support parents/carers who want to return work or training, this can enable households where there may be no adult in work to address their needs. In some centres Jobcentre Plus can undertake review interviews and advise parents during drop-in sessions. There will also be information on local jobs and childcare choices.

Centres may also develop links with Adult Education, Citizens Advice Bureaus and Credit Unions to further support parents and carers with information around benefits, debt advice and other financial issues.

For more information about Kent children's centres please contact:  
Kent Children & Families Information Service on  
**08000 32 32 30**

Email: [childrenscentres@kent.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscentres@kent.gov.uk)  
[www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres)  
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