

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

30 April 2019

**Lydia Wiltshire – statement and question regarding agenda item 11 -
Children’s Centre Buildings Consultation**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and
Skills**

Statement

Since the birth of my second child I have been using the White Horse Children’s Centre for its drop in clinic but mainly for the mum to mum breastfeeding peer support group.

I was recommended the mum to mum group by my health visitor as I was having some difficulties with breastfeeding. The locality of the group meant that it was easy for me to access with a new born baby as I was also recovering from a traumatic birth. I was made to feel extremely welcomed by the volunteers and also the staff within the children’s centre and I’ve continued to visit the group on a weekly basis. It was later discovered that my son had a tongue tie and whilst we were waiting for an appointment to get it cut the children’s centre were able to loan me an electric breast pump so that I could continue to feed him. This was a massive help to me as purchasing one myself would have been a massive cost.

I feel that the children’s centre is a safe place for new mums, it has a lovely room with comfy chairs and toys. Also having the staff there to talk to on a drop in basis is extremely helpful. If the groups were located in more public venues I wouldn’t have felt as comfortable as they aren’t necessarily aimed at young families and don’t have the added privacy of the rooms at the children’s centre.

I appreciate that the Council wants to provide services in venues that people access anyway. Very few new Mums go out to the sports centre or library as they don’t have facilities for babies or the privacy for breastfeeding mums. But new Mums like me do go to the Children’s centre. Westbury library is really small and doesn’t have changing facilities and the sports centre feels very big and too daunting.

The Children’s centre is the venue that people would prefer to go to get help and support. It’s the best place for a breast feeding group to be held. We need both the groups and to be able to drop in or ring up, because sometimes you need to see someone – social media or even a phone call won’t tell you if your baby is latched on and feeding properly.

Question

The Council states that one reason it is closing the Westbury children's centre is because it is underused. Advertising appears to be very poor, with many people not knowing what is available to them. What methods have been used to advertise the services the centre provides and what can be done to improve advertising in the future?

Response

All children's centre services are advertised on social media and through e-mail to parents. They are also promoted to maternity services, Health Visitors, nurseries and preschools who are then able to make referrals as necessary. We will work with the children's centre services providers to ensure that the services are visible to parents with children under the age of five.