

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

Hello my name is Delcey Orchard-Smith, I'm Mum to a one year old - Richard, and currently pregnant with my second.

I'm a frequent user of The White Horse Children's Centre in Westbury. I've used the centre since I was 26 weeks pregnant with Richard, initially it was for the Baby Steps Programme but from attending that one course I found many other programmes and groups of use to Richard and myself. These include Breastfeeding Group - which subsequent to attending, I myself am now training to be a Breastfeeding Peer Support Volunteer, The Sensory Room in the centre for Richard's gross motor skills development, Little Learners, New Mum and Baby Group, The Health Visitor Clinic and my husband used the National Careers Service. All of these were and still are accessed through the children's centre.

Whilst I appreciate the council are stating that the majority of these services will still be available albeit from other local buildings (such as libraries or public council buildings) I don't think the personal and private nature of some of these groups or programmes are being taken into account. Personally I wouldn't have felt comfortable going to a public, non secure building to attend a breastfeeding group as a new first time Mum, the fact the group was held in a safe and private space made all the difference to me. The same things goes for things like The Freedom Programme which supports mother's who have or are suffering domestic abuse. The National Careers Service, my husband suffers depression and anxiety and would never have used this service if he didn't know it was in a safe and private environment.

I think taking away the building would potentially leave parents who suffer from mental health issues or who are simply in the throws of new parenthood to fend for themselves and isolate many families resulting in further avoidable issues down the line. I really hope for the sake of saving money the council do not put the needs of families and our future generations in jeopardy.

Question

Many of the groups and services run at the children's centre require privacy and a neutral location which helps put people at ease. I understand that social services appreciate this and have used the building for visits between parents and children. The only other venues suggested have been the sports centre, library and Westbury Leigh Community Centre. Does the cabinet acknowledge that these venues cannot offer an appropriate alternative for these specific requirements?

Response

The venues that will be used will be appropriate for the specific requirements of families. There is no intention to make any family feel uncomfortable. There are other venues that are currently being considered and the plan is to make the service as friendly and accessible as possible.