

Speech to the Cabinet

A flawed process has resulted in a flawed model; the EYC and Y Panel has failed to implement the resolution passed by the Council. As a result of this failure, this minority report has been produced. Why was the process flawed? The Task and Finish Group took it for granted that the £2.3 million cut had been agreed and instead of focusing on the implication of these massive cuts, they instead focused on 3 models which would allow the delivery of these cuts. You are now being presented with recommendations passed by the EYC and Y Panel which itself said and I quote:

“ There remain a number of questions over what services will be provided at Children’s Centres under this new model, who will run the various Children’s Centres and to whom these services will be available”, yet they then went on to agree the recommendations, which centred on the Hub and Spoke Model.

I’d like to inform the Cabinet what the implication of cuts of 38% would be, regardless of which model is adopted:

- Most Children’s Centres jobs would be halved, with no qualified teacher support and few social workers
- Outreach workers from the Children’s Centres would be cut by 50% , so the most needy would be targeted, but this also means leaving many vulnerable and needy families without support. The Social Care Threshold is now so high, many families fail to get support, but have been picked up by referrals to Children’s Centres. This won’t happen and we will see a ballooning of families needing Social Care Provision, particularly those in transition in and out of Social Care.
- Great idea to keep all the Children’s Centres buildings open, but sadly for most there won’t be anyone in them. The key will literally be under the mat.
- There will be a 40% reduction on work with families in Children’s Centres who have been referred by Health Visitors. We do have about 67 Health Visitors, but Central Government has hugely expanded their responsibilities. Their case load should be 350; the average in B&NES is over 800. And yes we will get more Health Visitors but not enough to cope with the gap left by these cuts.
- There will be 40% less parenting courses, 40% less targeted work to promote child development, no funding for breast feeding groups, no funding for mental health services and no subsidies for the 5 nurseries attached to Children’s Centres which have a high number of children in need
- And I haven’t mentioned the support given to Universal Services, those services open to all families, which are a lifeline for many parents. None of these will be run by professional staff, so many families needing support will not now be identified.

My recommendations are that the Cabinet asks the EYC and Y Panel to report back in December with:

- A detailed implication of what the proposed cuts would have on frontline services
- The potential for management and efficiency savings that would have little impact on frontline services.
- A recommended model for the future of Children's Centre Services based on these management efficiencies and savings
- And a request to you the Cabinet that resources are identified from elsewhere to offset the proposed 38% cut as clearly there are insufficient resources available within the proposed Children's Services budget

We have been told by you that Front Line Services will be protected. How can you possibly say this when you are contemplating implementing this massive cut of 38% on our children and families. Even if some 3rd provider, such as Bernados comes forward, or we implement a Hub and Spoke Model, or rely on Health providers to deliver these services, it will be with a cut of 50% for frontline staff and a cut of 50% for our frontline services. I urge you to consider my recommendations