

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**11 DECEMBER 2018**

**QUESTION 1** in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor White to ask the Chair of the Committee:

**Cuts to Children's Centres**

The devastating closure of 9 out of 13 Children's Centres in Reading by Labour Councillors, and the reduction in the number of children attending the Children's Centres by 2000 is truly shocking. Please can the Lead Councillor update me and my Green Party Councillor colleagues on progress towards the Children's Centre Programme objective of "[building] on partnerships with Reading's Voluntary Sector to provide a wide range of universal activities and support for young children with undiagnosed/emerging needs?"\*

\*Note:

This is taken from section 3.1 iv

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/9606/item08-SunStreetCommunityCentre/pdf/item08-SunStreetCommunityCentre.pdf>

**REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee**

I invite Councillor Terry, the Lead Councillor for Children to make the response on my behalf.

**REPLY by Councillor Terry, Lead Councillor for Children:**

Whilst there have been reductions in the number of Centres, our current children's centres offer more targeted and integrated support to families who need it most. We also continue to provide support to voluntary groups and parents who wish to set up universal activities for children under 5 years, this includes a guidance pack that promotes good practice including safeguarding and health and safety requirements and online safeguarding training and advice.

There are over 60 universal groups across Reading offering variety of activities for young children and families.

Children's Centre staff deliver support groups for children with Special Educational Needs, disabilities or those with emerging additional needs. These groups meet weekly in all 4 hubs and support is provided to parents to develop strategies to effectively parent their children as well as support for

children to be ready for nursery and school. These were attended by 342 children between October 2017 and September 2018. Officers also attend Special Education Needs and Disability Strategy delivery groups to embed an inclusive approach across the partnership and ensure that children under 5 are fully considered within the implementation of the strategy. This year we will include the introduction of an autism awareness award (bronze, silver & gold) for under 5 settings to develop inclusive practice for children with additional needs.