**What are Children’s Centres?**

The core purpose of Children’s Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

* child development and school readiness;
* parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
* child and family health and life chances.

Children’s Centres should make available universal and targeted early childhood services either by providing the services at the centre itself or by providing advice and assistance to parents and carers via signposting or outreach.

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient Children’s Centre services providing the Core Purpose to meet the needs of children aged 0-4 and their families as detailed in the following Acts/ Legislation:

* SureStart Statutory Guidance 2013;
* The Childcare Act 2006;
* Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009 which inserted new provisions into the Childcare Act 2006; and
* Safeguarding (references to existing legislation and guidance).

**Why are we consulting on the future of Children’s Centre services?**

The creation of Achieving for Children in April 2014 brought all children’s services in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, including Children’s Centre services, under a single leadership team.

Given the current financial climate, Achieving for Children is required to deliver considerable efficiency savings over the next three years. A substantial part of these savings will be made from changes that Achieving for Children is proposing to make in its operating structure. However, a proportion of these savings will need to be made from the Children’s Centre service.

In order to make these savings, Achieving for Children is proposing a reorganization of the current Children’s Centre provision, to reduce costs and to re-focus service delivery in those areas with the highest need. This will mean basing Children’s Centre provision on an outreach model, bringing services closer to the families that use them, to enable us to continue to meet the needs of families with children under 5.

**How are Children’s Centre’s currently organized in Richmond?**

Achieving for Children currently has 5 stand alone Children’s Centre services in Richmond. These five centres deliver services across five localities with each Children’s Centre having their own building, and using a range of outreach venues such as community centres, libraries and primary schools to deliver services. The current five officially designated Children’s Centres are located at Ham, Hampton (Tangley Park), Heathfield, North Barnes and Stanley. Each Centre has an identified ‘reach’ area with a defined number of 0-4 year olds they are tasked to engage with.

The borough recognizes the quality of support and services our Children’s Centres can offer and in recent years, we have been fortunate to secure capital funding to develop a much needed hub centre utilizing the Mortlake Training Centre building, and this provides a much needed centre in this locality, which currently operates from the North Barnes location.

**What has been considered in putting this proposal together?**

* The need to save money whilst protecting current and future services.
* How services can be taken into the community, closer to the families and children that need them most.
* The different sorts of venues in which services could be run in the community.
* Our legal duties
* Information about attendance and usage of Children’s Centres.
* Information about the differences in need between different areas across the borough.
* Equalities Impact information.

**What is the proposal for the future delivery of Children’s Centre services?**

The proposals for the Children’s Centre service reorganization in Richmond are to:

* Reduce the number of Hub (designated) Children’s Centres from five to two, using the information and principles above to agree which will be designated as hub centres. We suggest two hub centres at Hampton (Tangley Park) and Mortlake (this is currently being developed at a new site at the Mortlake Training Centre.).
* We would also retain the Ham Children’s Centre, Heathfield Children’s Centre and North Barnes Children’s Centre buildings, and the current outreach buildings at Hampton (Norman Jackson), Mortlake Hall and Windham Croft Centre to continue delivering the core offer and meeting statutory requirements. Information indicates that these are areas of greater need.
* Reduce costs by ceasing the use of the Stanley Children’s Centre building, which is based in Stanley Primary School. Discussion is ongoing as to how to use the space going forward, with current suggestions including additional Special Education Need and Disability provision.
* Mortlake Power Station, which is currently used as an outreach location, will also return to youth services and will no longer be used for Children’s Centre services.
* Base Children’s Centre delivery on an outreach model, taking services to families in the community using existing community venues, to ensure that we are focused on those areas with the highest levels of identified need, and retain children’s centre services in areas of identified need across the borough.
* Reduce staff numbers in the Children’s Centre service from 43 to 38 across both Kingston and Richmond
* Reduce costs by £200,000 over the next 18 months across Richmond.
* Ensure that the new Children’s Centre provision is sited in areas that will allow alignment with the potential future delivery model for Achieving for Children.

**What other options have been considered?**

There are two main areas in which the required savings can be made from the Children’s Centre budget, premises and staff. It is AfC’s view that front line staff, early years professionals and effective partnership working that makes the most difference to families. The proposal makes the required savings from the premises budget and puts an absolute priority on retaining frontline staff to deliver services to families. Any alternative models would mean having to make savings from staff, and a subsequent reduction in the services that staff could provide.

**Who can take part in this consultation?**

Anyone can take part in this survey. We want to seek the views of as wide a range of people as possible, in order to help is to shape the future provision.

We are asking you for your views on these proposals. All feedback from these questionnaires will be considered when making any final decisions.

**How can you have your say?**

Your opinion is very important to us, and there are several ways in which you can share your views:

* Online: complete this simple survey here: <https://consultation.richmond.gov.uk/afc/richmond-childrens-centres>
* Complete a paper copy of this survey (available at all Children’s Centres in the borough) and hand it back to staff at any Children’s Centre.
* Email your queries, questions and views to: childrenscentres@achievingforchildren.org.uk
* Participate in a focus group at the Children’s Centres (dates to be advertised locally).

This consultation will run for 12 weeks, from 11th July to 30th September. Please ensure that all responses are received back by Friday 30th September.

**What happens next?**

The results and findings of this questionnaire will be published in October. A decision on the future delivery model of Children’s Centre services will be made following this, taking into account the results of the questionnaire, and other information.

**Confidentiality**

All the information you provide will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used to identify you personally. It will not be passed on to anyone else and will only be used for the purposes of this consultation. The analysis is done on an anonymous basis under the guidelines of the Data Protection Act.

The map below shows the location of the Children’s Centres in Richmond. The outreach locations shown are based on the current provision of the Children’s Centres, and may change over time.

