

Somerset Family Support Service & Children's Centre Consultation



Contents

Introduction	3
The Consultation	3
How can you get involved?	3
Somerset's current delivery model	4
The proposed service	5
Where would support be available?	6
What about the other children's centres?	6
What would this proposed new service look like in my area?	6
Sedgemoor	7
Taunton Deane	9
West Somerset	11
South Somerset	13
Mendip	15
How to have your say	17

Introduction

Welcome to Somerset County Council's consultation on our proposals for family support services and how we run our Sure Start Children's Centre services. The Council provides a range of support services for families and their children, aged 0 to 19 years old across the county, often working with other local partners including schools, nurseries, libraries and health services.

The focus of this document is specifically on three main services; health visiting, school nursing services and the getset service which is run by the council. The getset service includes our children's centres for 0-4 year olds and family support services for families with children aged 0-19 years. We know many people use our children's centres regularly but there are also many others who do not. We want to make sure the right support is available in the right places so that those who need it the most can access it as quickly and as easily as possible.

At the same time we have seen our funding from Government reduced in this area with more cuts to come.

The council is now proposing changes to the way that this support is delivered and is asking for people's views on those plans. We are working with our staff and partners across the districts to make sure we get this right.

We want to hear your views on our proposed changes to the way we provide support for children and families.

This document sets out why we believe we need to make changes and what those proposed changes would mean in the district council areas across Somerset. You can find out more detailed information on our website. At the end of this document is information on how you can have your say including access to our online questionnaire.

This consultation is open to anyone with an interest in these services, whether they currently make use of the service or not.

What would the proposals mean for me?

Services and support will still be available, but how and where you access them could change. The detail would vary from place to place, but we would look to provide more support in community venues, in people's homes and online; rather than in some of the buildings that you might currently go to.

The Consultation

The County Council has to make sure there are enough children's centres in its area to meet the local needs of families, so far as is practical.

We have developed a set of initial proposals for how we think the service could look in the future. This is based on our information about where services are needed, how the current network is used and projections for population change in the coming years.

This consultation is seeking people's view on our proposals and information on the services they value and how they like to access them.

We will use what people tell us to influence final proposals which will be considered by councillors early in 2018.

How can you get involved?

Please take some time to read through this consultation document and answer the short survey at the end. Your voice really matters and we do want to hear from you! This consultation will run from the week beginning 18th September until the 24th of November so there is plenty of time to get involved. We will have events in your district council area and drop-in days in our Sure Start Children's Centres, and the survey is available online too.

Nothing will change until we have heard back from people who use our current services including the Sure Start Children's Centres. We want you and your community to understand our proposals and let us know your views by completing a questionnaire.

Somerset's current delivery model

In 2005, 41 Sure Start Children's Centres were set-up in Somerset as part of a government programme aimed at helping families in more deprived areas to give their children the best start in life. Since then there have been many changes in what we have provided, based on new knowledge on ways of delivering services that are better and provide more effective support.

In 2014, after a consultation exercise, a number of our centres were de-designated from being a stand-alone Sure Start Children's Centre to become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

There are now 24 Sure Start Children's Centres across the county that along with our other linked delivery points provide the full range of early childhood services. In addition, support is also delivered from a range of community venues, such as village halls and libraries.

Sure Start Children's Centres provide early childhood services such as:

- early years provision (early education and childcare);
- social services functions (family support) of the local authority relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents; and
- information and advice services for parents and prospective parents.

Not all these services need to be provided from each building, but families can be signposted to them as children's centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as it is about providing premises in particular geographical areas.

The getset service, as well as providing the children's centre services also provides targeted family support workers for families that need additional help.

In 2013 Somerset County Council became responsible for the School Nursing Service (5-19 years) and from October 2015 the Health Visiting Service (for 0-5 year olds).

Health Visitors are specialist nurses and nursing assistants who provide support to all Somerset parents with children aged 0-5 years, by visiting women when they are pregnant and providing advice and support on parenting, infant feeding, preventing child accidents, managing common childhood illnesses and keeping parents healthy. If parents or children have greater needs, health visitors can provide more intensive support with more frequent visiting. Some health visitors have specialist qualifications in promoting Mums' mental health.

School Nurses are specialist nurses and assistants who provide support to school aged children aged 5-19 years, they deliver the national child measurement programme, immunisations and health and well-being advice and support, often through clinics at secondary schools.

Having responsibility for all these services means we now have the opportunity to look at what families need now and in the future and give them the opportunity to influence how and where support can be best delivered, within the funding we have available.

The proposed service

We propose setting up a family support service for children aged 0-19 years, which would include our current getset service (which included children's centre services), family support services, health visitors and school nursing services. Alongside this we will develop greater links with other services families need, for example midwives, child-minders, schools, GPs, and adult services and build stronger links with communities.

Families are all different and we know we need to be flexible and creative to make sure you can access support no matter where you live. Times have changed too and we know some families have greater use of and access to digital technology.

Every community and district is unique. How and where we provide services needs to be different in each of our districts. We have a lot of data that we have used to come up with our proposals, but we also know that people who live in our communities know them best and your thoughts and comments are vital for our understanding of what works best for you.

Our vision is that services are designed in such a way they support children and young people whose needs are different and varied. We believe that our new proposals would work well at different levels to inform, enable, support and protect families.

We want to

- make greater use of mobile devices and technology to create an easy to use online information service so that families can help themselves in finding the support that suits them.
- make services and support easier to access by making more use of local community venues like libraries, health clinics and schools to provide outreach support and meeting families in their own homes.

- focus on those families who need our help the most, including families with new babies, families with children with disabilities and those with identified additional needs.

- review our getset early help services with health visitors and school nurses and work towards one family support service for 0-19 year olds, and to work more closely with midwives, schools, GPs, child-minders, mental health services and other services that care for both children and adults.

- create a network of main Family Centres in areas of greatest need, acting as main hubs linked with a local outreach programme which will include the use of libraries, health centres, community venues and schools.

- change some of our Sure Start Children's Centres so they can be used for the wider community, not just 0-4 year olds. We also propose helping schools to provide more classroom spaces and help nurseries provide more places.

- reduce our spending on running buildings and instead spend our money on providing great services.

What would the proposals mean to me?

It depends what support you might need, where you live and how you wish to receive it – but we want to make support more accessible, especially to those who need it most.

The support you are used to will still be available, it's where you access it that may change. It might mean you would need to go to a different place than you are used to, it might mean you get support in your own home or online.

We are also trying to bring all the support together into one service so it works better.

Where would support be available?

Our proposals would see us move from our current 24 Sure Start Children's Centres to create a network of eight main Family Centres acting as a "hub" with a number of linked community and outreach venues but also delivering support in family homes and online.

Family Centres would be in the county's areas of highest need and where the number of children and families are most concentrated. These centres would be the main "hub" for the surrounding area but importantly they would be supported by services operating out of community venues such as health centres, libraries and in some cases in people's homes.

The proposed Family Centres would provide:

- Access throughout the week
- Group activity rooms
- Spaces to have confidential discussion on sensitive subjects
- Helpful staff and volunteers able to provide information and guidance where needed
- Safe and secure buildings so children are kept safe
- Spaces that are physically accessible to all
- Young People Friendly environments
- Work space for children's centre staff and partners where they can work with secure wi-fi facilities

Community venues and outreach programmes. We already deliver from a range of other sites including other linked children's centres. We have also started discussions with partners across Somerset to see how we can share space in other buildings that you already know and use, such as libraries, health clinics, schools and village halls.

School Nurses undertake much of their work within the school setting, we believe that much of this will continue, unless you tell us of other ways in which you would like to receive this support.

We will develop an outreach programme to meet local needs that will

include activities in community venues across the districts. We want to hear your thoughts on useful community venues through which you would like to access support.

Delivery in families' homes. Health Visitors and family support workers meet many new and expectant parents in their own homes and this is likely to continue, where parents find this meets their needs. Where you tell us a different style of delivery would be more suitable we will listen.

Online. Technology and people's access to it has changed a great deal. Lots of families want to be able to help themselves and simply need to be provided with information on what is available and where. We want to look at increasing the use of mobile devices by providing apps and texts alongside providing information and advice online.

What about the other children's centres?

We propose offering the buildings we no longer need to schools for extra classrooms and to nurseries for extra places. Somerset has a growing young population and there is a big demand for more school and nursery places. We may also still use some of the space to provide our services. This means these centres will be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres and become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

What would this proposed new service look like in my area?

Every community is different. The following pages set out our proposals for how Family Support Services would look in the five district areas: Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane, South Somerset, Mendip and West Somerset.

Sedgemoor

Overview

As things are now

4 Sure Start Children's Centres

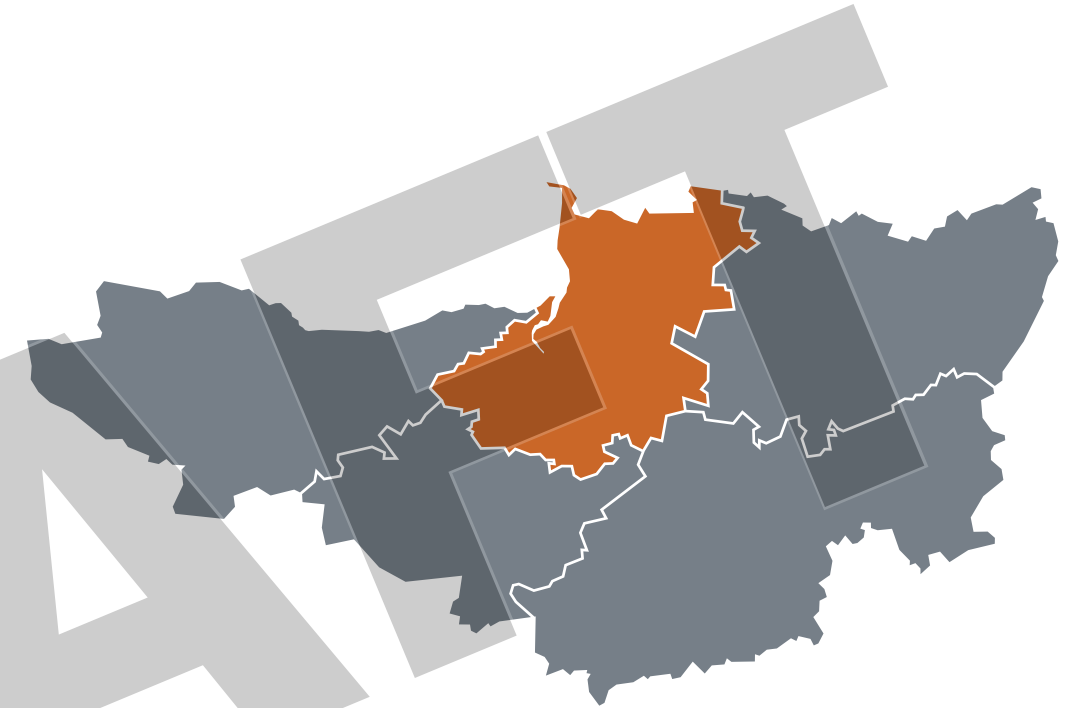
5 linked delivery points

Our proposals

2 main Family centres

Network of linked delivery points & community venues to deliver services

More outreach and online support



Local detail

- Sydenham and Highbridge Children's Centres would become main Family Centres.
- Victoria Park Children's Centre currently accommodates staff delivering a range of support and services in the Community Centre next-door. The services would continue to be delivered from the Community Centre and we would find another way of accommodating staff.
- Hamp Children's Centre would be used to provide additional school and nursery places.
- Victoria Park and Hamp Children's Centres would be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres and become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

Current Arrangements		Proposed Arrangements			
Sure Start Children's Centres	Linked delivery points providing early childhood services	Proposed main Family Centres	Reach area	Network of Delivery Venues and Outreach programme	Sure Start Children's Centres to be de-designated & become linked delivery points
Victoria Park Children's Centre, Bridgwater	Nether Stowey Children's Centre	Sydenham Children's Centre, Bridgwater	Sedgemoor Central, West, East & South	Community venues and other council and partner buildings across the area including Bridgwater, North Petherton, Cannington, Nether Stowey, Woolavington, Highbridge, Cheddar and Burnham-on Sea	Victoria Park
Hamp Children's Centre, Bridgwater	Eastover Children's Centre				Hamp
Sydenham Children's Centre, Bridgwater	Woolavington Children's Centre				
Highbridge Children's Centre, Highbridge	The Valley Children's Centre, Cheddar	Highbridge Children's Centre	Sedgemoor North		
	Octopus Children's Centre, Burnham-on-Sea				

Taunton Deane

Overview

As things are now

6 Sure Start Children's Centres

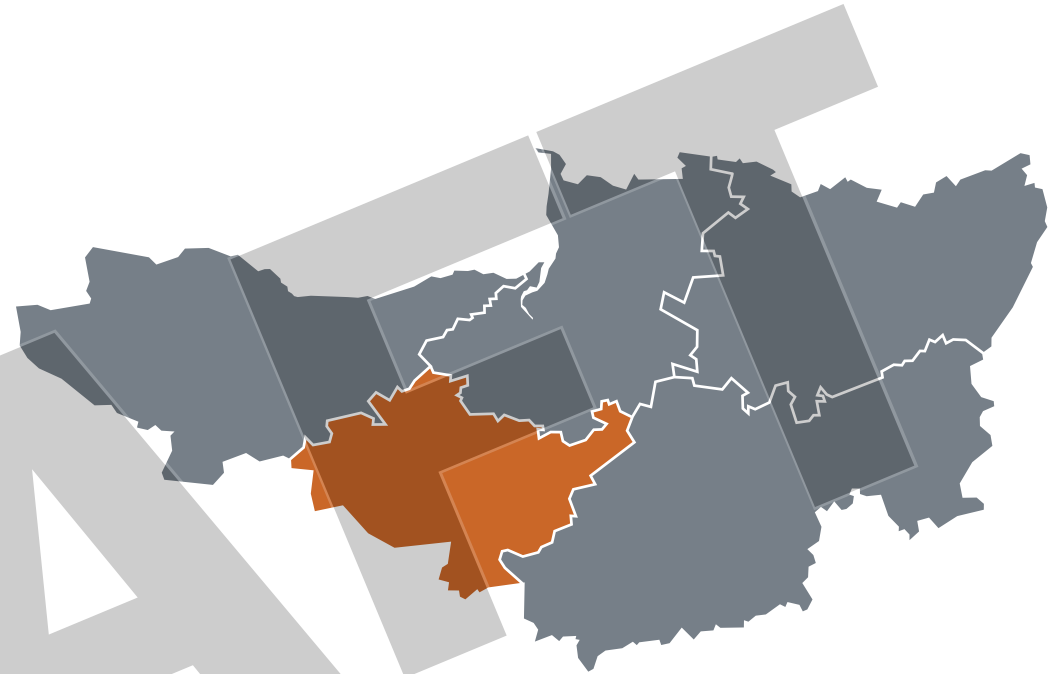
2 linked delivery points

Our proposals

2 main Family centres

Network of linked delivery points & community venues to deliver services

More outreach and online support



Local detail:

- Acorns and Hillside Children's Centres would become main Family Centres
- The Hollies would continue to provide support, but we would look at how the building could be used by the wider community as well as the existing nursery.
- The Bouncy Bears Nursery in Wellington Children's Centre would continue and we will explore with them and Beech Grove Primary School the use of the site for additional early years places.
- The Brock House Nursery would continue to run from the centre in Norton Fitzwarren.
- Brock House (Norton Fitzwarren), The Hollies (Taunton), Wellington and Bishops Lydeard Children's Centres would be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres and become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

Current Arrangements		Proposed Arrangements			
Sure Start Children's Centres	Linked delivery points providing early childhood services	Proposed main Family Centres	Reach area	Network of Delivery Venues and Outreach programme	Sure Start Children's Centres to be de-designated & become linked delivery points
Acorns Children's Centre, Taunton	The Villages Children's Centre	Acorns Children's Centre, Taunton	Taunton South & East	Community venues and other council and partner buildings across the area including Taunton, Creech St Michael, Bishops Lydeard, Norton Fitzwarren and Wellington	The Hollies
The Hollies Children's Centre, Taunton	Fledglings Children's Centre				
Hillside Children's Centre, Priorswood, Taunton			Taunton North & West		Brock House Wellington Bishops Lydeard
Brock House Children's Centre, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton		Hillside Children's Centre, Taunton			
Wellington Children's Centre					
Bishops Lydeard Children's Centre					

Note: Bishops Lydeard Children's Centre was approved to be de-designated in April 2014 subject to agreed changes to a lease arrangement with the management committee of the village hall. These negotiations have not yet been resolved but the centre will now be de-designated.

West Somerset

Overview

As things are now

3 Sure Start Children's Centres

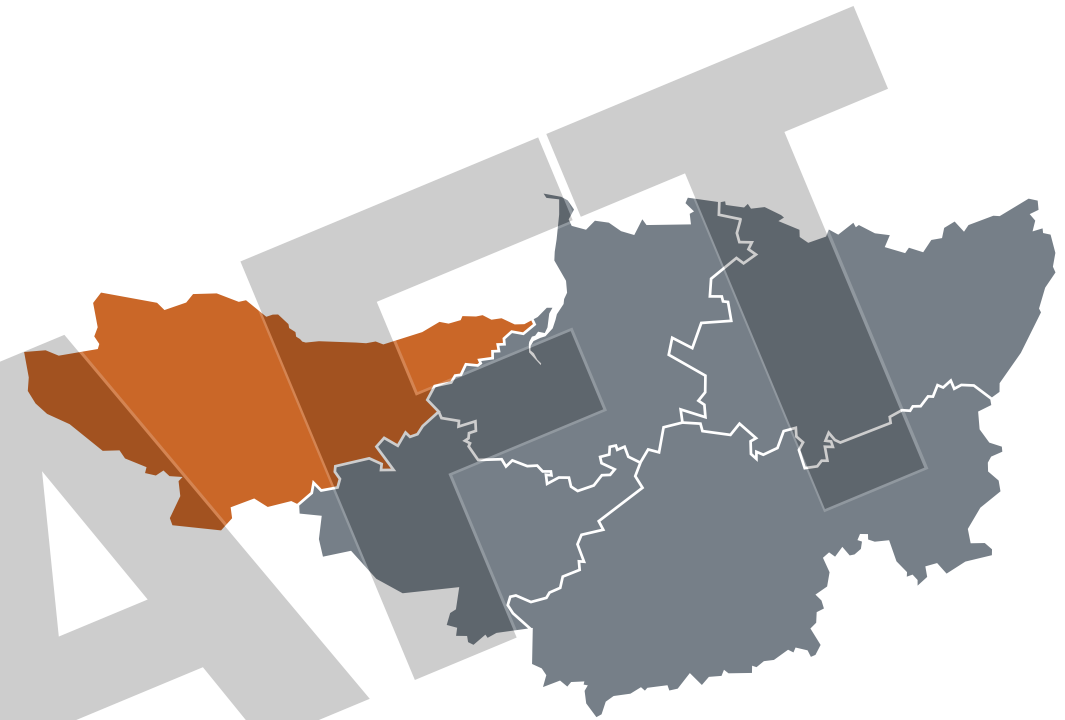
2 linked delivery points

Our proposals

1 main Family centre

Network of linked delivery points & community venues to deliver services

More outreach and online support



Local detail:

- Williton Children's Centre would become the main Family Centre
- Little Vikings Children's Centre in Watchet would provide additional early years places and retain space for family support services to be provided on site.
- The wider community use of Alcombe Children's Centre in Minehead would be explored with West Somerset Council
- Alcombe and Little Vikings Children's Centres would be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres and become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

Current Arrangements		Proposed Arrangements			
Sure Start Children's Centres	Linked delivery points providing early childhood services	Proposed main Family Centres	Reach area	Network of Delivery Venues and Outreach programme	Sure Start Children's Centres to be de-designated & become linked delivery points
Williton Children's Centre, Williton	Wiveliscombe Children's Centre Dulverton Children's Centre	Williton Children's Centre, Williton	West Somerset	Community venues and other council and partner buildings across the area including Minehead, Watchet, Winsford, Timberscombe, Wheddon Cross, Porlock, Crowcombe, Stogursey and Holford	Alcombe Little Vikings
Alcombe Children's Centre, Minehead					
Little Vikings Children's Centre, Watchet					

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South Somerset

Overview

As things are now

6 Sure Start Children's Centres

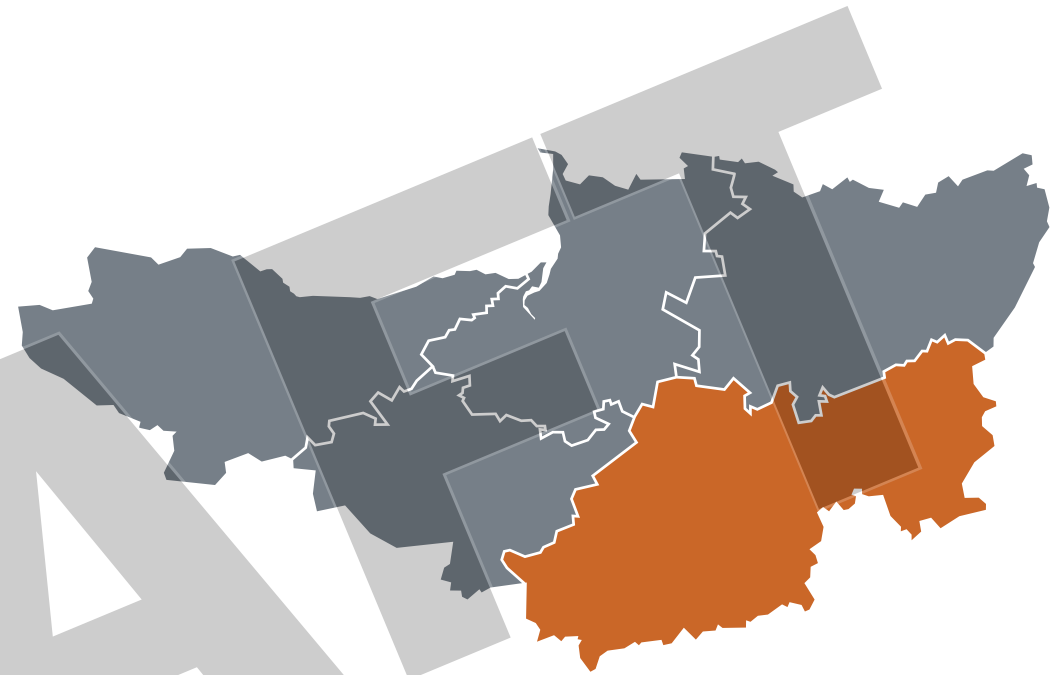
5 linked delivery points

Our proposals

1 main Family centre

Network of linked delivery points & community venues to deliver services

More outreach and online support



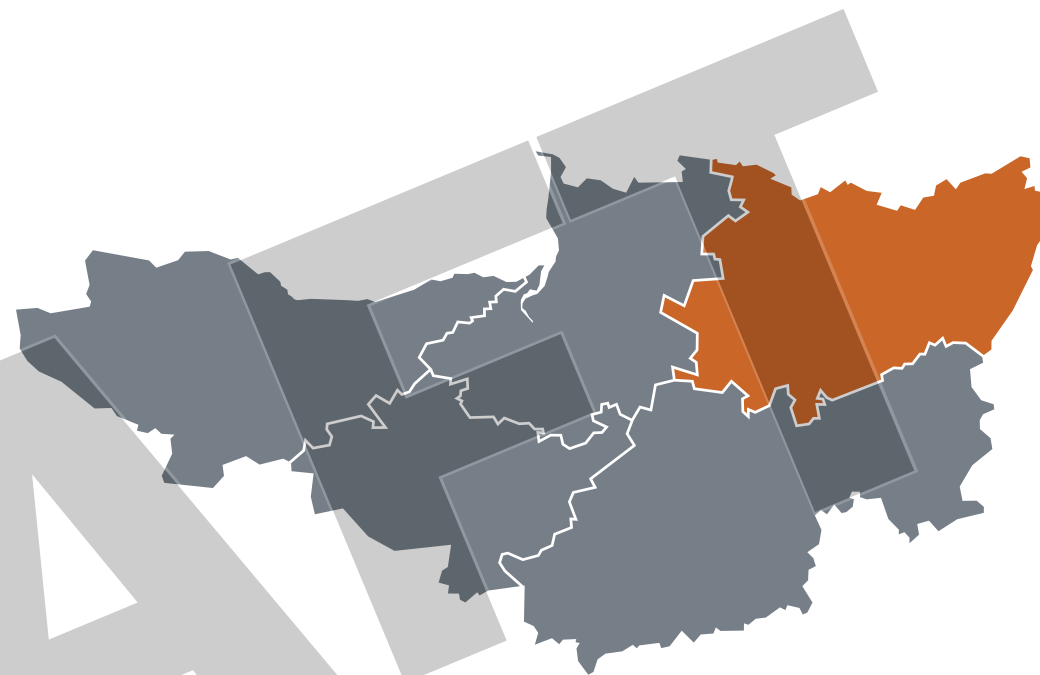
Local detail:

- Reckleford Children's Centre in Yeovil would become the main Family Centre
- Balsam Children's Centre in Wincanton would continue to provide services to the community.
- Birchfield Children's Centre would provide additional early years places for Birchfield Primary School.
- The nursery provision at Oaklands Children's Centre would continue and we would explore transferring Oaklands Children's Centre building to Oaklands Primary School for additional places.
- The Clare House Nursery provision at Chard Children's Centre would continue.
- We would explore transferring the Little Marsh Children's Centre building to Ilchester Primary School for additional nursery places
- Birchfield, Oaklands, Chard, Little Marsh and the Balsam Children's Centres would be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres and become linked delivery points for early childhood services.

Current Arrangements		Proposed Arrangements			
Sure Start Children's Centres	Linked delivery points providing early childhood services	Proposed main Family Centres	Reach area	Network of Delivery Venues and Outreach programme	Sure Start Children's Centres to be de-designated & become linked delivery points
Reckleford Children's Centre, Yeovil	The Swainson Building, Ansford Jigsaw Children's Centre, Barwick Crewkerne Children's Centre Ile Valley Children's Centre, Ilminster The Levels Children's Centre	Reckleford Children's Centre, Yeovil	South Somerset	Community venues and other council and partner buildings across the area including Yeovil, Ilchester, Langport, Castle Cary, Crewkerne, Chard, Ilminster and Wincanton	Birchfield Oaklands Chard Little Marsh Balsam Centre
Birchfield Children's Centre, Yeovil					
Oaklands Children's Centre, Yeovil					
Chard Children's Centre					
Little Marsh Children's Centre, Ilchester					
The Balsam Centre, Wincanton					

Mendip

Overview	
As things are now	Our proposals
5 Sure Start Children's Centres	2 main Family centres
3 linked delivery points	Network of linked delivery points & community venues to deliver services
	More outreach and online support



Local detail:

- The Key Centre for Children and the Community in Frome and Glastonbury Hub would become the main Family Centres
- The Bridge Children's Centre in Frome would provide additional early years places
- The Link Children's Centre in Coleford could provide additional early years places and we would explore this with Bishop Henderson Primary School
- The House Children's Centre in Shepton Mallet would provide additional school places
- The Bridge, Link and House Children's Centres would be de-designated as Sure Start Children's Centres

Current Arrangements		Proposed Arrangements			
Sure Start Children's Centres	Linked delivery points providing early childhood services	Proposed main Family Centres	Reach area	Network of Delivery Venues and Outreach programme	Sure Start Children's Centres to be de-designated & become linked delivery points
The Key Centre for Children and the Community, Frome	Wells Children's Centre	The Key Centre for Children and the Community, Frome	East Mendip	Community venues and other council and partner buildings across the area including Frome, Coleford, Street, Wells and Shepton Mallet	The Bridge The Link
The Bridge Children's Centre, Frome	The Mill Children's Centre, Chilcompton				
The Link Children's Centre, Coleford					
Glastonbury Children's Centre	Street Children's Centre	Glastonbury Children's Centre, Library Hub	West Mendip		The House
The House Children's Centre, Shepton Mallet					

How to have your say

Your views are really important to us so we want to make it as easy as possible for you to have your say.

You can complete an online survey at:

www.somerset.gov.uk/familysupportandchildrenscentres

Paper copies of the survey will be available in all our children's centres whilst the consultation is open.

You can also come along and speak to somebody in more detail, share your views and complete a questionnaire at one of the following open days:

Date	Time	Venue	District
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

The consultation will close on 24th November 2017

The analysis of the consultation will be published in January 2018 and used to inform a final decision to be taken by the Council's Cabinet in early 2018.

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