

Councillor Jones
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2BX

23 July 19

Dear Councillor Jones,

I am writing on behalf of the Ipswich and Suffolk members branch of BASW (British Association of Social Workers) in response to the proposed closure of children's centres in Suffolk.

It is our belief that your argument that buildings don't deliver services misses the inherent value and purpose of a children's centre. We consider children's centres to be places of sanctuary for overwhelmed, stressed out parents; places to make friends; places where someone who isn't 'known' to services can go for support and find it in safety. They are places where families can access support without feeling the stigma of needing to request it in a formal process. Your plan to close children's centres ignore the role they play as a gateway to early intervention services.

The intention to close children's centres in rural areas is particularly concerning. The families who access these services are not necessarily families who can get in their car and drive to the next town when they need help; these are often families who rely on increasingly scarce and costly public transport. The plan to close children's centres will isolate families, cutting them off from the support that they need.

I note from the article in the East Anglian Daily Times on 8th July that you identify opposition to the closures as a "reluctance to change". The families and professionals who use children's centres are not in opposition to these closures because of a reluctance to change; our opposition comes from a place of serious concern about the impact that such a huge cut in service provision will have on families and related services both now and far into the future. This will have a generational impact on families which cannot currently be measured and will have a knock-on effect on how services to children and families are provided at every level.

We intend to engage with the consultation process and will argue strongly for the value of maintaining children's centres as an integral part of services for families in Suffolk. In the meantime, we would very much like to meet with you to discuss this matter further. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Winkless
BASW Ipswich and Suffolk Branch, British Association of Social Worker