



Councillor Mary Evans  
Cabinet Member for Children's  
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Dear Cllr Evans,

I write to you with reference to the meeting held with Anita Farrant and Michael Howe on Friday 1 May, where they informed UNISON and RCN about the Council's plan to redesign the Children's Centre service. We were informed about the schedule for the Children's Centre redesign paper to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on the 14 July 2020.

UNISON and RCN raised concerns about the Council's proposal to push ahead with the plan regardless of current climate surrounding Covid-19, and have requested for this process to be put on hold through out this national pandemic and were informed that your view would be sought.

The pandemic continues to affect the children, young people and families who use these services currently or who may need to in the future. It is clear this public health crisis has major implications on the redesign plans. It is unclear how current nursery provision will be affected by Covid 19 and it is highly likely to threaten the viability on private providers and place additional demands on Children's Centres in the future.

The families who currently access this service are already having to deal with job losses, poverty, domestic abuse and income reduction. The schools and SEN education provision will drastically change in the future which will impact on these vulnerable families.

There must be a full and detailed impact assessment following Covid-19 for the children and young people who will access this service and this must be fully incorporated into the design of the Children's Centre service. We urge the Council to act with candour and rigour through this process and ensure the community needs are fully incorporated into the original proposal (which was developed prior to the pandemic).

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*General secretary Dave Prentis Acting regional secretary Tim Roberts*

Anita Farrant has shared the communication which will be sent to Children’s Centre staff this week regarding the proposed paper to be submitted to CYP DMT, and the Cabinet meeting on 14 July 2020. This is an extremely unsettling time for the staff who are affected themselves by the circumstances around Covid-19.

These staff members are not in the workplace and cannot be properly engaged and consulted with on such a major redesign and restructure of this level. While we understand the no redundancies planned many staff will have their basis of work altered at a time when there is still much uncertainty about the service delivery or the needs of families as a result of the pandemic. UNISON is concerned that this is not an optimum time to hold staff consultations and that our representatives will not be able to fairly support our members who will be disadvantaged as a result and UNISON must challenge the Council’s proposed timescale.

UNISON is currently obtaining views from our members and will provide a report to Council in a meeting which is due to be arranged. UNISON has not received a response from the public consultation from the 1 March and additional concerns raised in writing to Michael Howe and we await a formal response.

We are very concerned at the prospect of rushing through a major redesign of Council services when full and democratic discussions with staff, service-users and the wider public is not possible.

We hope that you are able to re-visit the Cabinet decision to progress with the proposed timescale and put on hold the plans to progress with this redesign at this stage. Due to the current time frame, please can you inform us of the Cabinet's decision by Monday 1 June 2020.

Yours sincerely,



Winston Dorsett  
UNISON Eastern regional organiser