

Burgess Hill Children & Family Centres
Public Reaction To News Of Possible Closures
7 January 2021

Female Resident - Rachel R

Took both my daughters to the Gattons to see health visitors and had my midwife appointments there. Local and handy when you have a baby. This is very upsetting to hear.

Female Resident - Kat T

I have had so much support over the years from the incredible children and family centres! They help so many families and provide support that is so desperately sought after and needed! To close these would be a huge mistake! Children and their families need this valuable support now more than ever!!

Female resident - Natasha H

I've used both these sites for weigh in and stay and play sessions. They ran parenting classes for new parents, it's a great way of always knowing where and when you can speak to the health care workings for any questions and advice and also to meet other parents with similar aged children as a lot of other baby groups aim at slightly older ones. A lot of new mums may not even be able to drive to Haywards Heath.

Male resident - Rob A

We used this when my youngest was born, the help and advice given by both centres were second to none, they helped prior to youngest starting at nursery and then during the transition to nursery school. The staff were amazing and not only supported the children but parents as well. It's disgusting that WSCC are looking to close or reduce this critical key service

Male resident - Kevin S

A friend of my wife had post natal depression, it was only the check ups at the family centre that got her out of her house, talking to her friends again. These centres are vital to the health and well being of both our children and their parents. There should be more with the Northern Arc development coming, not less.

Female resident - Rebecca F

This makes me very sad. I started going to groups at both centres 11 years ago. More recently, 4 years ago, I started going to a group at Sidney West, with my son who is now 6. The group is for children with additional needs and was open all year round, half terms and holidays too. The first time I went, it was a sigh of relief to find a group where everyone was in a similar boat and no judging. It is so hard to find a group like that when you have a child with additional needs.

Female Resident - Emma S

Used The Children and Family Centre at The Gattons with my young daughter to see the speech therapist. They were very helpful and supportive.

Female Resident - Kerry M

The original idea of the children and family centres, as I recall, was to have community hubs where the specialists were the people that did the travelling, where these multi agency hubs could support members of the community in community settings. What has changed, other than more people relying on food banks, unemployment rates higher, bigger need for social housing, town centre dismantled, more people living in poverty, and a sodding pandemic to live through. Of course it makes sense to shut down the community hubs at this time, let's face it the under 5s don't vote so it's easier to take from them.

Male Resident - Nick H

It's a terrible idea to close these family centres they are essential for helping parents and some times essential for the mental health and wellbeing of some parents it actually helps getting them out of the house in a different environment and seeing other parents and socialising. I am also frustrated and disgusted that I cannot register the birth of my new daughter as they have closed all the registrars offices until further notice when I asked why it was to protect new parents! I'm more likely to catch COVID going into Tesco to get nappies and formula then going into the registrars office with a mask on where they could wipe the door handle and chair down between appointments or even set up a zoom appointment! There going to have such a back log when they do decide to open.

Female Resident - Yvonne O

The centres may be good, my daughter having used one, but the inconsiderate parking by parent's I will not miss. It's bad enough from the school, which is between 815am and 9am in morning and between 2pm and 315pm in afternoon. The centre parents all day. The road is not a car park for these facilities. If you could deal with the issue. Then would be ideal to keep open.

Female Resident - Lauren A

I use to take daughter to the stay & play sessions. Great place to meet other parents and children. They both have lovely sensory toys and activities. I miss going.

Female Resident - Piera S

This is terrible. The Discover Baby groups at Gattons were the first baby groups I went to with my baby, and I missed them so much when they had to stop last year. They were always very busy, so it's obviously a popular and much needed service, so what is the justification for closing them? It's been tough enough for families to cope recently as it is, especially those with new babies since March, and now for these services to be closed is a huge blow to the community. Having services like these close to home are much needed for getting you out with a newborn, which is so important for mental health as a new parent. Anybody is at risk of post-natal

depression, so these services should be available to everybody.

Female Resident - Sara A-J

I do think this is disappointing. Both are great in so many ways to so many. With the town increasing it is amazing that the already up and running services and infrastructure is cut. Then it will be noted - 'we shut that , let's spend time trying to source a facility that we can set one up again !' I do think that some times those who make decisions don't actually go that bit further. Both facilities are very valuable and should be retained. What will be inplace for people to tap into ?? Somethings can be cut, other things like this enable and support more than notes show at a meeting to make cost cuts.

Female Resident – Lyndsey P

I used the weigh in sessions and the discover baby sessions at Sidney West. We then went into lockdown. Don't they think that new parents have had a tough enough time with having no support and access to these sort of services with covid, let alone taking it away completely.

Female Resident - Debbie M

What will the buildings be used for if the family centres are closed and where will families access the facilities they receive now - is it back to The Brow or do young families have to traipse all the way over to Bentswood in Haywards Heath - hardly the environmental choice when we have 7k more homes coming our way.

Female Resident - Tory S

Wow I'm really sad to hear this. As a first time mum 6 years ago I lived locally to Sydney west and the Gattons and used their weigh in clinics, baby groups, and workshops weekly. The services had reduced by the time I had my second baby, and I'm shocked to hear it might close altogether. It was always packed full of mums and babies and a I found it a real life line, and the midwives and health visitors so knowledgeable. I don't know how else you would be able to access that vital support and community?

Female Resident - Ema T

I don't know what I will do if these 2 centres close. I had so much support when my 1st was born here but my 2nd was born in 2020 so I haven't been able to go. Now having a 1 and a 2 year old the idea both these centres i relied upon so heavily will be closed is concerning as i planned to attend the baby groups not only for my children to develop and interact but also for me to meet other Mums.

Male Resident - Ian G

Once again the Tories at WSCC show their true colours. The measly amount saved by closing these centres has a very real human cost, as well as environmental impact of people having to travel further to access them. The demand for them hasn't decreased, so the supply shouldn't either. What will be the cost in the larger community be? There is always a fallout from these decisions that never seems to

be considered.

Female Resident - Gemma C

This is a real shame. I spent a lot of time at both centres when my children were young and we all enjoyed it. Its a great place for parents and babies/ children to socialise and the weigh in clinics were great too. This will be a huge loss to the community.

Female Resident - Amy-Louise W

The majority of our children's centres in Surrey have closed at a large detriment to local communities. Many families on low incomes have suffered as they can't afford to go to classes where their children can interact with others due to the high cost.

Female Resident - Laura P

I used to regularly weigh my baby at Gattons for reassurance she was gaining weight healthily and ask for advice about her eczema without taking up a gp appointment. The milk clinic was so helpful when I was having feeding pain and I loved the classes after the Monday clinic. Such a valuable place.

Female Resident - Harriet E H

Is there anything we can do to try and save them, or at least one of them? I don't need them now, but I want to save their facilities for people who could be on the situation I was in when my daughter was very young.

Female Resident - Karen L-C

Until Covid we held a fortnightly twins and multiples group here (Lindsay Child, Holly Biggs, Catherine Atkins), the only one in the Burgess Hill area, which was an absolute lifeline for parents of multiples. The thought of future parents of multiples not having access to this (as well as the many other services offered) is heartbreaking.

If the Haywards Heath site is the one that I am thinking of (on a residential street?), I only went there once with the boys and it was really hard to park and completely impractical for a double pushchair, which I had to leave outside and then shuttle the boys in with help from a stranger.

Female Resident - Rhian S

These sites were great when my children were younger...speech and language ran a drop in service, the toy library, toddler groups, Talking Tots and Music Bus. It was great.

Female Resident - Helen S

In this time of need too? It's a lifeline at the best of times for some parents and vital for the community.

Female Resident - Lorna B

We accessed Springboard for deaf children both at Sydney West and also Northgate in Crawley, as well as other special needs sessions such as Jo Jingles. They were amazing groups. Also accessing the midwife at the Gattons and the Health Visitors.

Female Resident - Ladean B

This is so sad! I had my midwife app here as I couldn't get the day off to do it at the doctors and they were amazing also used to get my daughter weighed at both the gattons and Sidney west then when I had my daughter, me and couple of others with the help of the gattons we made a group for under 25s as most felt uncomfortable going to normal groups with all aged parents (due to the stereotyping of young parents) I made some new friends just from going to this group, they helped me out so much in so many different areas I needed, they also done little 'workshops' for us they asked what we would like to do and listened and helped us, we done parenting courses to help us understand childrens behaviour, they done a cv writting course so we could all have our cvs up to date for when we were ready to go to work, they done cooking courses for us to get better at making things from scratch. The lady's that work there were amazing and I can't thank them enough for everything they did. I also loved it so much I became I volunteer there, they put me through the training I needed. I actually miss going to 'baby group' (what we called it) and I hope they don't close as they help so many families out in need!

Female Resident - Jacqueline J J

NO NO NO!! play and learn plus meet there it's a group for children with additional needs, love that group 😊

Female Resident - Charlotte W

Took my daughter to both of these up until the first lockdown last year. Really hope they dont close them.

Female Resident - Hannah Louise I-H

Gattons family centre was the only one open that I could see a Health visitor to weigh my new born son for his 2 week check back in September because of Covid. Haywards Heath one was shut.

Female Resident - Connie H

My son went to speech therapy at Sidney West when he was really small. I also went to cookery classes and a craft group which offered a creche for some MUCH needed time to be myself. We went to the play groups and story time there too, borrowed toys from the toy library. It was a real lifeline for me when my children were toddlers. I walked across town to attend their sessions. I'm sorry that parents will miss out on the groups we had access to there. Burgess Hill was brilliant for young families 8-10 years ago, it seems they are closing many of the facilities that made it so. Not many selling points for BH at the moment. Such a shame.

Female Resident - Char M-C

I'm actually so annoyed. It gives us something to do and establishes a routine for us. It gives the kids chance to play, learn and interact with other children. As far as I'm concerned there aren't enough children centres 😊😞

Female Resident - Danielle B

I think it's great that the midwives will finally have a potential base as they are in desperate need of it, but it's terrible that they are removing the WSCC services.

I have gone to baby groups at both sites, including the group for children with additional needs. They are fantastic places to meet other mothers and get support. Without these groups mothers that are struggling are going to slip through the net. Postnatal depression is at an all time high as a result of no groups or face to face support due to COVID restricting these services, why do WSCC think this is a good idea for the long run? Proactive support is much more beneficial than reactive support! And it costs a lot less as well.

Female Resident - Harriet E H

They both helped me so much when my daughter was young, its almost too emotional to explain how much they supported and helped me. I don't think I would have coped without them. Our baby group was such a lifeline for me, and the friendships it created. The services at the 2 Children and Family Centres were what kept me going through Postnatal Depression. No where else offers these services. Time to Talk can not in anyway replace the services that these centres provided. I really do hate to think about how I would have coped with out these 2 centres.