

**From:** Anne Lovely <Anne.Lovely@firstforwellbeing.co.uk>

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**To:** 'Phil Grace' <raundslibrary@gmail.com>; Kate Houlihan <Clerk@raunds-tc.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Carl Dorney <Carl.Dorney@firstforwellbeing.co.uk>; Ann Breen <Ann.Breen@firstforwellbeing.co.uk>; Libraries <Libraries@northamptonshire.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Children's centre arrangements from 1st September - Raunds Library

Dear Phil and Kate

This communication clarifies NCC's position with regard to children's centre arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> September onwards.

### **Children's Centre – legal definition and requirements**

The 2013 DoE Statutory Guidance<sup>[1]</sup> defines a children's centre as *'a place or group of places: through which early childhood services are made available'* The Guidance states that a children's centre 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 (mothers and fathers) and prospective parents in accessing services provided elsewhere. Local authorities must ensure that children's centres provide some activities for young children on site'*

The nature and regularity of children's activities is not defined; children's centre services will be offered flexibly in each area depending on the needs of local families and the resources available. In Northamptonshire there are 36 designated children's centres. 15 are either standalone dedicated children's centres or are based on a shared site with a school or community venue. 21 children's centres are based on library sites (Designated Library Children's Centres).

### **The current children's centre arrangements in NCC Libraries**

Currently most libraries include some universal activities for children such as regular rhymetime or story telling sessions; these sessions are usually provided by library staff or volunteers and this is part of the library core offer.

As you may know, the Library Service also has an agreement in place with NCC to coordinate and deliver a range of universal children centre services. Children's centre services are funded separately to the core library service. Funding is used to employ a dedicated team of Early Years Workers. Under the current arrangement early years staff, library staff and volunteers work together to deliver a variety of events and activities for families with children under the age of five across all of the libraries.

### **New arrangements**

Whilst the management arrangements across Northamptonshire libraries is changing, NCC remains committed to retain a vibrant and effective universal early year's Health and Wellbeing offer. The current level of investment for universal services has been protected and will continue to be funded through the Public Health Grant.

NCC Commissioners have been working closely with the Library Service to refresh the service specification and ensure there is a stronger focus on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all young children and their families across the county.

Over the next few months the Library Service will recruit new staff to fill vacancies in the Early Year's Health and Wellbeing team. These staff will be qualified early years practitioners with additional training in public health related interventions. Once we have qualified staff in place, the team will be available to support families in each of the designated children's centre areas. They will work closely with health visitors, early year's settings, voluntary groups and other partners, to coordinate local services and support parents to access a wide range of universal provision in their locality. This should mean that young families will have better access to good universal support, particularly in their child's first two years. (1001 Critical days)

### **How will NCC work with Designated Libraries Community Groups to meet the children centre requirements?**

As part of the service specification NCC will provide each designated library with a children's centre 'information point'. This will be a visual point of reference for young families visiting the library. It will include contact details for the Early Years Health and Wellbeing team and other useful information about local services and support. The information point will be kept up to date by the Early Years Health and Wellbeing team working in your local area.

All libraries will be able to offer access to local and government information through the public access computers provided by NCC; families will be able to access information and advice as they require.

In addition to providing information, advice and signposting support, the Early Years Health and Wellbeing team will work with each of the designated library children's centres to deliver a programme of universal activities. What we offer will vary according to local need. The team will work with parents and other community partners in each area to develop the local offer. The aim of these activities will be to support new parents, promote health and wellbeing and provide early learning activities to promote school readiness.

### **What does this mean for your library?**

You will start to see some changes in the type, number and staffing of under 5's events in your libraries shortly. This happens every year during the summer holidays as libraries become very busy with the Summer Reading Challenge and these under 5's events are often poorly attended due to holidays and other family commitments.

We know that in September attendance at events changes as children move into preschool or school and we take this opportunity to revise the local timetables in conjunction with staffing and other priorities.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September:

- The 14 NCC run statutory libraries will continue to deliver the library core offer which includes children's events in order to deliver the Children's Promise which forms part of the Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers. These events will be delivered by library staff and volunteers and the timetable will include a minimum of 2 library under 5 events such as rhymetimes and bounce and rhyme.
- Where there is capacity, NCC libraries will continue to support children's events in your library in order to deliver the Children's Promise until such a point that volunteers are

recruited and trained to deliver them or the SLA is signed and the community group take over. One rhymetime session will be timetabled per week

- NCC will provide your library with a children's centre information point. This visual point of reference for young families visiting the library will include contact details for the Early Years Health and Wellbeing team and information about local services and support.
- Your library will be continue to offer access to local and government information through the public access computers provided by NCC and families will be able to access information and advice as they require.

If you would like you would like any training or support for any of your volunteers please contact the community co-ordinators [CMLCoordinators@firstforwellbeing.co.uk](mailto:CMLCoordinators@firstforwellbeing.co.uk)

<sup>[1]</sup> **Department of Education (2013) Children's Centre Statutory Guidance**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678913/childrens\\_centre\\_stat\\_guidance\\_april-2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678913/childrens_centre_stat_guidance_april-2013.pdf)

Kind regards

Anne

**Anne Lovely**

Strategic Manager - Core Frontline Services  
Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

T: 01604 368184  
M: 077955 90455



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