

30 January 2024

Southend-on-Sea City Council  
Public Health Team  
PO Box 6  
Victoria Avenue  
Southend-on-Sea  
Essex SS2 6ER

Dear Sirs

### **Consultation on Southend-on-Sea family centre services**

Healthwatch Southend is the independent voice of Southend residents who use, or may use, NHS and social care services. Our role is to provide information about local services, capture the lived experience of residents so that it can inform service improvement, and to hold the NHS and Southend City Council to account. The contract for the Healthwatch Southend service is held by a registered charity, to underpin our independence.

Healthwatch Southend understands that Southend City Council is having to review its budget, given the service pressures it is experiencing. We would like to make the following observations:

1. The Council is to be congratulated on producing a comprehensive document and setting up a number of events for local people to contribute their views. We would be interested to know how well attended these events were.
2. It is implied that individual services will be reviewed. Can we have the Council's assurances that parents and carers will be actively involved in any redesign?
3. Family Centres are valued as offering many "one-stop" opportunities. Given the cost of living crisis, it is important to minimise the number of journeys parents/carers make to access services. Healthwatch Southend hopes that the Council will take access into account when reviewing any services.
4. The full consultation document note that "There will be a greater role for and involvement from partners and the potential for commissioned based services as well as community-led activities." To what extent has the Council undertaken any engagement with partners and VCFSE organisations, given the pressures they

themselves are facing? This should have a firm focus on A Better Start Southend/City Family CIC.

5. Has the Council undertaken a risk assessment and can this be placed in the public domain?
6. We have received a copy of the equality impact assessment relating to this proposal. We would want to be reassured that the Council has fully taken into account the impact of its proposal under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We hope these comments are helpful to the Council.

Yours faithfully

Owen Richards  
**Chief Officer**