

Consultation on the proposed repurposing of Cruddas Park Early Years Centre

06 September 2021

Background and rationale

Cruddas Park Early Years Centre is a maintained nursery school and playgroup funded by Newcastle Council. It is located in a facility just off Scotswood Road in the south of the city.

A nursery school is a school with a Headteacher and teaching qualified staff which caters only for nursery aged children during school term times.

Nursery schools nationally and locally are recognised as providing high-quality early years provision, more often in areas with high levels of disadvantage:

“it is widely accepted that progress in early years for children from low income backgrounds depends on attendance in the highest quality settings. The only early education provision that is at least as strong, or even stronger, in deprived areas compared with wealthier areas is nursery schools”
(Sir Michael Wilshaw HMCI, Ofsted, 2014).

The **Nursery** offers 17 hours and 15 minutes of free nursery education for 3- and 4-year olds from Monday to Wednesday (including the free 15 hours of early years education funded by the Government) The day begins at 9.15am and ends at 3.00pm.

The **Playgroup** runs from Monday to Friday, between 9.15am to 12.15pm. There is a cost attached to Playgroup, but children may be entitled to a free government funded place, dependent on the family's situation.

There are three permanent members of staff (Headteacher, School Business Manager, Playgroup Lead); 3 members of staff are on fixed term contracts (1 x Early Years Teacher, 1 x Classroom Support Assistant, 1 x mid-day Supervisory Assistant); and two Casual Support Assistants (Playgroup).

We will consult with staff, governors, the local community, and unions around this proposal.

Whilst the provision (building) has space to accommodate approximately 80 children at any one time, its current published admission number (PAN, the maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group to the nursery) is 53.

The latest [Ofsted report](#) from Ofsted's visit to Cruddas Park Early Years Centre in December 2018 concluded that the centre 'continues to be good'.

Classification: **unclassified**

The sustainability of Cruddas Park Early Years Centre has been under review for the last few years as the numbers of families using the centre have declined.

The Early Years Centre has been operating with a **financial deficit** since 2016/2017 and is projecting an accumulated deficit of £168,000 for end of 2020/21.

In recent years part of the building has been let to Newcastle Bridges School and Thomas Bewick School and before that Newcastle's Pupil Referral Unit.

The table below shows numbers on roll for the playgroup and nursery from the school census. In January 2020 (last data before the first lockdown) there were 27 children at the nursery.

Cruddas Park Early Years Centre number on roll (NOR) since October 2018

Year	Term	E2	N1	N2	Total
2018/19	Oct 2018	9	16	6	31
	Jan 2019	10	13	8	31
	May 2019	20	9	8	37
2019/20	Oct 2019	8	13	14	35
	Jan 2020	14	11	16	41
	May 2020	School census cancelled due to Covid			
2020/21	Oct 2020	8	5	7	20
	Jan 2021	13	4	9	26

Source: School Census returns

Nursery education within schools is currently recorded via the codes 'N1' and 'N2' with 'N1' used for children aged 2 at 31 August but turning 3 during the year and 'N2' for children aged 3 at 31 August but turning 4 during the year. E2' (Early second year) for children aged 1 at 31 August but turning 2 during the year

From the spring term headcount, 12 children will leave the nursery in July 2021 to start reception in other local schools in September 2021. If the nursery school closes, a total 14 children will require access to another provider of equal or better quality. Based on current numbers on roll for September 2021 (as at 30/6/2021), numbers of children who will require access to another provision is 27 (within both Playgroup and Nursery).

The proposal: Closure of Nursery School

The statutory process to close a nursery is set out in the [School Organisation process for closure of a maintained school](#).

Following a review of Cruddas Park Early Years Centre, we have found that there are **insufficient numbers of children** using the centre compared to capacity and the centre has been running at a financial deficit for a number of years. This was reported to Newcastle City Council's Cabinet in April 2017 and officers were authorised to review and consult on the future of Cruddas Park Early Years Centre.

However, there is **sufficient early years provision** in the nearby area to absorb the current numbers using Cruddas Park Early Years Centre and this provision is rated as either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

- Within a 1-mile radius around CPEYC there are **1,000 children on roll and 1,097 available early years places** (Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019)
- Within a 2-mile radius there are **2,355 children on roll and 1,097 full-time equivalent early years places available**. The 2019 the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment found 82% occupancy in that area, still suggesting some capacity.

The proposal: Opening an Early Years SEND Hub

We propose that Cruddas Park Early Years Centre would become an Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Hub. It would provide flexible shared spaces with access to education and health services for families of children with special educational needs or disabilities across the city all in one place. This would build on existing good practice and provide a strategic collaborative approach.

Newcastle City Council will work closely with Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital Trust (NUTH) to deliver services from the hub including: multi-disciplinary early intervention groups, assessment clinics in a child and family friendly environment, parent/carer drop-ins, SEND toy library sessions, training for parents/carers and the Early Years workforce across the city.

Outline of process and timeline

Newcastle City Council proposes for the existing Cruddas Park Early Years Centre nursery and playgroup to be **closed at the end of the spring term 2022**.

In summary, this will involve the following five-stage statutory process for the closure of the nursery school:

- Stakeholder Consultation – No prescribed timescale
- Publication of statutory notice - 1 day
- Representation period - must be 4 weeks
- Decision (by local authority) - within 2 months of end of notice
- Implementation - as per statutory notice.

We are inviting staff, parents of children at Cruddas Park Early Years Centre, and other interested parties, to take part in the stakeholder consultation, including meetings and the opportunity to ask any questions or discuss concerns. There is a response form that we would encourage you to complete as part of the consultation which is available at <https://letstalknewcastle.co.uk>.

The stakeholder consultation is scheduled to commence on **06 September 2021** and will close at **5pm on 22 September 2021**

Stakeholder Consultation Events

Monday 06 September 10am to 11am

Consultation with Cruddas Park Early Years staff at the centre.

Wednesday 08 September 11.30am to 12.30pm

Use this link to join our online meeting: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Thursday 09 September 2021 1pm to 2pm

Use this link to join our online meeting: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Friday 10 September 2021 9am to 10am

Use this link to join our online meeting: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

If you are having difficulties logging onto the online meetings please phone: 0191 2115074 and we will try to assist you.

The stakeholder consultation will close on 22 September 2021 at 5pm.

Following the stakeholder consultation, we will collate all responses for all decision-makers to determine whether to proceed to the next stage of the process. This would be a 4-week statutory notice period.

We will be working towards a cabinet decision being made on **22 November 2021**.

Timescales

	Milestone	Key date(s)
1.	Stakeholder consultation with Parents, Staff, Governors, Ward Members, local schools and EY provision and other stakeholders	06 September – 15 September 2021 (10 days)
2.	Decision to proceed to statutory notice	16 September 2021
3.	Publication of statutory notice	17 September 2021
4.	Statutory Representation period	17 September 2021 – 15 October 2021 (4 weeks)
5.	Evaluate representations received	15-21 October 2021
6.	Cabinet Report and Decision - Publish on forward plan	14 October 2021
7.	Cabinet Report – deadline for draft report to be shared with Directors Team (DT)	21 October 2021
8.	Cabinet Report- DT discuss draft Cabinet Report	26 October 2021
9.	Cabinet Report – Deadline for final papers (10am)	05 November 2021
10.	Cabinet Report – Cabinet Agenda Published	12 November 2021
11.	Cabinet meeting – decision to be taken	22 November 2021
12.	Cabinet Decision published	23 November 2021
13.	End of Cabinet call in – confirmation of decision (10am)	30 November 2021

For further information or if you have any additional queries please contact Mark Patton, mark.patton@newcastle.gov.uk

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