

Marshland St James Parish Council

Clerk: Miss Sarah Thorpe, 88 Smeeth Road, Marshland St James, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 8JF
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Cllr. Stuart Dark
Chair of Children's Services Committee
Norfolk County Council

2nd November 2018

Dear Cllr Dark

RE: TRANSFORMING OUR CHILDREN'S CENTRE CONSULTATION

The Parish Council discussed the about consultation at a meeting on 30th October and agreed to sent a letter of representation in response to the consultation.

The Parish Council is very concerned to hear of the proposal to close the vast majority of Children's Centres in the county.

In particular we feel that the proposed closure of the Emneth Children's Centre would have a significant impact on the children in our village. Marshland St James is measured as: IDACI deprivation 10-20% most deprived. We currently have 54 under 5's in this parish. However, it is felt that there is a greater need for the current service than identified and that the situation is actually worse than these figures show.

We strongly believe that Emneth Children's Centre, which has been ranked as "outstanding," is a very good example of how the system can work effectively and it should be kept open. The building is currently owned by Norfolk County Council so we cannot see that there will be much saving in closing this centre.

In our local area the West Walton Children's Centre has been closed so we have already suffered the loss of this service, with their workload being taken on by the Emneth Centre.

Our village is in a very rural area and there is no regular bus service so local outreach meetings, as currently provided by the Emneth Children's Centre, need to be maintained. It is essential that these outreach sessions are maintained with professional input and this could not be effectively replaced by a group run by parents alone.

The Parish Council firmly believes that the service provided should be available for all children rather than just those who are assessed as having a need.

We would like to ask that the proposal to close Emneth Children's Centre is reviewed as we believe that the service they offer is of an excellent standard and essential for the health and wellbeing of our children.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Thorpe

Sarah Thorpe
Clerk to Marshland St James Parish Council