

# People Scrutiny Commission

## 19 February 2024

### Public Forum



#### Public Forum Statements

Ref	Name	Topic
S1	GMB (Lorraine Gaskell attending)	Our Families Programme – Children's Centres



## PUBLIC FORUM - STATEMENTS

### Statement 1, GMB

4 years ago, Bristol City Council Children's Centres were transferred out of the Education department, this has proven to be a very successful move, which has led to the staff at the Children's centres being able to build a more effective service that serves the wider community in a far more beneficial way. The staff have been able to build stronger links with a range of health care, and child safety professionals, and they feel that this change has benefitted the team and the wider community.

Therefore, they were incredibly surprised to discover that there was an intention to now move the Children's Centres back to Education. A number of the teams, and individuals, have asked questions about the impact on the children and families that they support. There have been no definitive answers to date. This has heightened the sense of anxiety across the teams. These are dedicated, professional staff who strive everyday to ensure the safety and well being of children and families in some of the most deprived areas of Bristol. Their concern is that the proposed move will lessen, not strengthen the work that they are able to do.

We have not been provided with any sound reasoning for the move, and absolutely nothing that would suggest that the change of directorate would benefit the service. The simple refrain of 'nothing will change' is not a valid point, as if nothing will change, then why is there a change? Having looked through the available documents on the proposal there has been a lot of work done on what the aspiration for the Children's centres is, however, we cannot find any tangible plans of how these aspirations will be realised.

GMB have spoken with the vast majority of the staff in the Children's centres, and they are all against transferring back to Education. The employees in this area are already feeling that their voices are not being heard on this issue, and also feel undervalued. I would not say that the staff are 'demotivated' as that would give a false picture of their dedication and professionalism, however they have clearly expressed that they do not believe that senior members of staff at BCC have a full understanding of the work that they do, nor its importance to some of the most vulnerable families in Bristol.

**GMB urgently requests that the committee recommends that the proposal is not moved any further forward until all relevant questions have been answered, and staff have been consulted with in a meaningful way. They are on the ground and know better than anyone how the service operates on daily basis.**