# Community rallies to save Ealing’s children’s centres amid closure plans



In West London, a staunch community campaign is brewing against Ealing Council's decision to close 12 children's centres, a move that many local parents believe will significantly harm vulnerable families in the borough. At a demonstration held recently, dozens of parents, childcare professionals, and opposition councillors gathered in a show of dissent, voicing their concerns about the detrimental impact these closures could have on the community.

In March, Ealing Council approved a budget that included measures for these closures as part of a broader plan to address a projected £57.7 million deficit by 2029. As the council aims to save approximately £27.8 million in the next financial year, the rationale behind this drastic step is to streamline services and reallocate resources to outreach initiatives. However, critics argue that this approach overlooks the immediate and practical needs of families reliant on these centres.

Kinga, a local mother, described the centres as a "lifesaver" for her and her family. She emphasised how vital the centres have been for her mental health and support network, particularly in a challenging environment devoid of extended family. "If they really close them... I can't, I can't even think about it," she expressed, highlighting the deep emotional stakes entwined with these facilities. Her sentiments reflect a broader anxiety among parents about losing crucial lifelines that provide both emotional and practical support.

Catrina, another mother impacted by these closures, underscored the social aspect of the centres which foster community connections, an especially valuable resource for parents of children with special educational needs. She noted how they provided a safe space for conversations among parents facing similar challenges, facilitating peer support that many families need. “Sometimes we need someone to speak to and as a community we don't want them to take it away," she said, reflecting the fears of many in Southall, where four of the six local centres are slated for closure.

Concerns regarding accessibility also loom large among opponents of the closures, particularly for families with limited transport options. Some families could find themselves facing a journey of up to 25 minutes to reach the nearest centre, a situation complicating their access to essential services. A staff member from one of the affected centres shared that several local mothers are already grappling with difficult choices driven by financial hardship, such as prioritising food over travel expenses to reach health and educational services.

While Ealing Council has assured residents that outreach services will continue in various venues, the effectiveness of these alternatives is widely questioned. The provision of services in settings like places of worship may alienate some members of the community, especially those suffering from domestic abuse or feeling unsafe expressing their concerns in public environments.

The emotional resonance of the closures cannot be overstated, with testimonies highlighting the centres as a vital source of help during the overwhelming early stages of parenthood. Sarah, a new mother, passionately conveyed her concerns to the council leadership: “Please don't close our children's centres." She articulated the critical role these facilities play in easing the challenges of new parenthood, allowing connections to form among parents and offering activities geared toward child development.

Furthermore, a petition spearheaded by local resident Emily Saunders has gained significant traction, amassing over 700 signatures in a short span. The petition calls for a reversal of the proposed cuts and highlights fears that such reductions could halve the support available to families across the borough. Advocates stress the irreplaceability of hands-on services, which encompass everything from health visits to community activities aimed at young children.

As the council continues to analyse the results of the public consultation that ended in late April, the future of these children's centres remains uncertain. While they have committed to engaging residents in the planning process, the overwhelming sentiment among community members is one of urgency and concern. Many hope their voices will prompt a re-examination of the proposed cuts, emphasizing the need for services that foster community bonding and support in these formative years.

The outcry from the community demonstrates a pressing call for empathy and understanding from local authorities, with parents seeking assurance that their needs will not be overlooked as budgetary pressures mount. The struggle for the future of Ealing's children's centres encapsulates broader issues surrounding support for young families, underscoring the essential role community services play in nurturing resilience and connection amid an increasingly isolated landscape.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
2. Paragraphs 2, 4
3. Paragraphs 4, 6
4. Paragraphs 4, 6
5. Paragraphs 3, 6
6. Paragraphs 2, 3, 6
7. Paragraphs 4, 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/12-west-london-childrens-centres-31649114> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-council-cuts-children-services-taxes-b1216170.html> - Ealing Council has announced plans to close 12 children's centres, aiming to save £27.8 million over the next 12 months. The council intends to increase outreach services and repurpose remaining buildings, but critics argue that these cuts will disproportionately affect vulnerable families, particularly in areas like Southall, where four centres are slated for closure. The council also plans to raise council tax and the social care levy to address a projected £57.7 million deficit by 2029.
3. <https://www.change.org/p/halt-the-planned-reduction-of-children-s-centre-services-in-ealing> - A petition initiated by local resident Emily Saunders has garnered over 700 signatures, urging Ealing Council to reconsider proposed cuts to children's centres. The petition highlights concerns that reducing services will halve provision across the borough, making it challenging for families without transportation to access necessary support. Supporters emphasize the importance of these centres in providing essential services to young children and their families.
4. <https://www.caremark.co.uk/ealing/news/asking-council-to-reconsider-cuts-which-it-says-will-halve-provision/> - A petition asking Ealing Council to reconsider planned cuts to children’s centres in the borough has received a large number of signatures in just a few days. Started by local resident Emily Saunders, it has been backed by over 700 people at the time of writing against its target of 1,000 having only been set up last Friday (20 September). She says she was prompted to start the petition as she had personally benefitted from the comprehensive services offered by Ealing’s children’s centres which include midwifery and health visits, alongside community stay and play/dance activities aimed at 0-5 year olds. It is claimed that the cuts or ‘repurposing’, which could see 11 of the centres shut, will mean that provision will be cut by half across the borough. The council is proposing to concentrate services in fewer centres but opponents say that this will reduce accessibility for those that don’t drive and booking activities will become more difficult.
5. <https://ealing.greenparty.org.uk/2025/02/17/ealing-consultation-on-childrens-centre-closures/> - Ealing Council has initiated a consultation on proposed closures of 12 children's centres as part of its 'Improved Early Help Offer'. The consultation, open until April 27, 2025, seeks public input on the impact of these closures. The Green Party questions whether reducing the number of centres and staff capacity will effectively improve early help services. They emphasize the importance of community participation and accountability in decision-making processes.
6. <https://www.ealing.gov.uk/childrens-centre-consultation> - Ealing Council is consulting on proposals to reorganize early help services provided by its children's centres. The consultation, open until April 27, 2025, aims to improve service sustainability and effectiveness by consolidating services into fewer centres and additional community venues. The council plans to repurpose remaining centres for other uses and enhance digital services. Residents are encouraged to participate through online surveys and public meetings to share their views on the proposed changes.
7. <https://new.ealingtoday.co.uk/page/shared/common/eacouncil188.htm> - An angry reaction has followed Ealing Council's announcement of plans to cut crucial children's services. A petition has been set up by users of West Twyford Children's Centre in the Hanger Hill ward, which is earmarked for closure as part of the authorities' cost-cutting and 'streamlining' measures. The petition emphasizes the vital role of the centre in providing services such as Stay and Play sessions, English classes, and parenting courses, and urges the council to reconsider this detrimental step.