

**18 January 2016****Agenda Item: 4**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S CENTRES SERVICE CONSULTATION**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on the work to reshape Children's Centre Services following public consultation.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. Children's Centre Services provide a core offer of childcare, early education, health and family support services for families with children up to the age of five years. They aim to tackle child poverty and social exclusion by working with parents to be, parents, carers and children to promote physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children so they have the best start in life.
3. Nottinghamshire has retained all 58 Ofsted registered Children's Centre Services and has evidenced improved performance whilst significantly reducing the overall budget in recent years. With the introduction of the Family Service in November 2015 it has been possible to refocus the Children's Centres on their core age group of 0-5 year olds, and to ensure that they are closely aligned with providers of early years education and services such as Health Visiting.
4. In 2013, following a competitive process, Nottinghamshire commissioned Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust, Family Action and North Nottinghamshire College under the umbrella of Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP), to take over the operation and delivery of its Children's Centres. As a result of their excellent performance against the targets set the contract has recently been extended until 2018. The performance of Children's Centres is reported on a quarterly basis to Committee.
5. In February 2014, Full Council agreed to reduce the Children's Centres delivery budget by £3 million from April 2016. Inevitably this has meant that some of the services have had to be reshaped. However, even without the financial pressures, commissioners have already seen the need to review how Children's Centres are delivered, to make them more flexible, effective and efficient. This has resulted in a number of staffing changes within NCFP, in particular reducing the costs of managerial and administrative functions, which has reduced cost and has not impacted on the volume of direct delivery with families.

## **Delivery of Children's Centre Services**

6. As part of the process of reviewing how best to deliver local Children's Centre Services focused attention has been paid to the locations that are most effective in engaging children and families. Nottinghamshire County Council owns a number of buildings used to deliver these services but in some cases they are not effectively located or efficiently used. The Council has worked closely with NCFP to identify buildings that require review and has recently consulted with service users and the wider public about where they would like to access services. Primary Schools, Health Visitors and other stakeholders were engaged in the consultation and their feedback with service users has been used to progress changes in the use of some buildings.
7. In some areas the Children's Centre buildings are now in less than optimal locations as local communities have changed, for example, where new housing or new communities have developed away from a centre's location, or the number and profile of children living in an area have changed. There may have also been changes to the local population in terms of need and ability to access particular locations, for example, changes to road networks or public transport.
8. The outcome of the review, supported by the results of the consultation, is that the priority is to focus resources on offering quality services for children and their families, rather than on buildings and their maintenance. Children's Centre Services are not offered solely from a dedicated building, and outreach work, delivered from a range of community venues including libraries, primary schools and community centres and home visits is often more effective in reaching target groups. With this in mind buildings that are not being fully utilised or where better alternatives exist to deliver through other community settings will be closed or their opening hours reduced whilst maintaining the footprint of 58 distinct Children's Centre service offers serving local need. NCFP will continue to develop outreach services across the County, particularly in rural areas. The proposed changes to specific buildings are shown in **Appendix 1**. It is important to note that the implementation of the premises changes will not impact negatively upon the numbers of families supported across the County by Children's Centre Services.

## **Other Options Considered**

9. All services and building bases have been considered for change and the final options confirmed only after consultation with the provider, service users and the wider public. On line surveys, printed questionnaires and focus group meetings have been used to gather public views.
10. Detailed analysis of the consultation findings are included in the supporting background paper.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

11. The report is for noting only.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

13. The rationalisation of premises will help the Council to contain the cost of maintenance, cleaning and management of the Children's Centre estate. It will also support providers' reduction of administrative and management costs.

## **Implications for Service Users**

14. Service users will not see a reduction in Children's Centre services as most of these take place outside of the dedicated Children's Centre building. Families will still be able to take part in a full range of activities from other community sites.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Committee notes the reshaping of Children's Centre Services following public consultation.

**Derek Higton**

**Service Director, Youth, Families and Cultural Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Irene Kakoullis

Group Manager, Childhood and Early Help Services (Locality)

T: 0115 9774431

E: [Irene.kakoullis@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:Irene.kakoullis@nottsc.gov.uk)

## **Constitutional Comments**

15. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (SS 21/12/15)**

16. The financial implications of this report are contained with paragraph 13 above.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Nottinghamshire County Council Children's Centre Services Review Consultation report - November 2015.

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