

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

FUTURE COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS – CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks Council approval for:-
 - An enhanced core service offer for Nottinghamshire children's centres
 - Future commissioning plans for children's centre provision, with provision focused upon an extended early intervention offer for children and families

Information and Advice

2. The Early Years and Early Intervention Service was formed as part of the restructure of the Children's, Families and Cultural Services Department in April 2011. The major component of the Service is the network of 58 children's centres across the County that provide integrated services for children (currently from pre-birth to five) and families. The Service also currently comprises a Specialist Family Support Team, the Families Information Service and an Early Intervention Team.
3. Children's centres are currently managed directly by the Council in Newark and Sherwood, Rushcliffe and most Mansfield locations. In Gedling, Ashfield and Broxtowe, the centres are managed by Nottinghamshire County Health Partnership via a Commissioned Accountable Body (CAB) agreement. In Bassetlaw, North Nottinghamshire College manages the centres via a CAB agreement, and Family Action (a national charity) also manages 2 centres in West Mansfield under the same arrangement. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of the provision is therefore managed directly via external bodies.

Service Review

4. As part of the Council-wide programme of service reviews that started in 2010, the Early Years and Early Intervention Service commenced a detailed service review. This has been informed by a number of key drivers:
 - The Council's continuing strong commitment to retain a network of 58 children's centres;
 - Required original efficiency savings of £5.2m (incorporating £1.25m derived from savings from a review of family and parenting support provision that was originally developed as a separate business case);

- A revised Government approach to early years provision (Supporting Families in the Foundation Years¹ and Families in the Foundation Years²), that places greater emphasis on early intervention, and sets out Governmental expectation that children's centres, whilst retaining a universal offer, should focus more on improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged young children and their families;
- Nottinghamshire's new Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy (approved by Council in June 2011) that places a priority on giving children the best start in life, whilst ensuring there are appropriate structures and processes in place to support those children, young people and families who are most vulnerable.

5. The Service review has been undertaken, therefore, with the following intentions:

- To reduce management costs and strengthen frontline delivery;
- To enable the more effective integration of services;
- To develop more efficient service delivery arrangements;
- To focus resources more accurately in order to benefit the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families, whilst maintaining a strong universal framework for early years provision;
- To extend the upper age range for children's centre support for vulnerable children and families from 5 to 12 years;
- To ensure equitable access to provision is available across the County;
- To integrate existing early years provision to offer a single point of access to services - via children's centres - for Nottinghamshire's early years offer;
- To ensure that the future delivery of early years and early intervention provision is based upon need.

Draft vision and core offer

6. It is within this context that the Early Years and Early Intervention Service has developed a new vision:

“All children, young people and their families will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential by having the best start in life, and have access to services when and where they need them most”.

7. This vision is underpinned by the following guiding principles. The Service will:-

- *Support families to make informed choices about services that build resilience and self-reliance;*
- *Target resources to those children and families with greatest need within a universal service delivery framework;*
- *Ensure that service provision is fully accessible and delivered within local communities;*
- *Listen to children, young people and their families and involve them in decision-making about how best to deliver services;*
- *Consider the needs of the whole family when assessing and responding to the needs of children and young people;*

¹ Supporting Families in the Foundation Years, Department for Education, 2011

² Families in the Foundation Years, Department for Education, 2011

- *Work with partners to maximise best use of available resources to local communities;*
- *Promote opportunities for voluntary and community participation in the planning and delivery of services;*
- *Support a suitably qualified, skilled and experienced workforce to ensure provision is delivered to a high quality;*
- *Commission services that have been shown to make a difference.*

8. The vision is intended to ensure that:-

- *Parents have the information, skills and aspiration to fulfil their parenting role;*
- *Children and their families have access to a range of high quality early learning and childcare opportunities to prepare them for school and wider learning opportunities;*
- *Children and families can benefit from good health and well being through the provision of integrated, community-based health services, and access to volunteering, training and employment opportunities.*
- *Children's centres become a single point of access for children and family support, early intervention and information, and advice and guidance services to a wider age group.*

Delivering Nottinghamshire's core offer for children's centres

9. To deliver this vision across the children's centre network in Nottinghamshire, the following enhanced core offer for children's centres has been developed. The core offer sets out a high level specification for service delivery at each children's centre. **Appendix 1** to this report sets out the detailed core offer, and sets it against current statutory requirements.

10. The key features of the revised core offer for children's centres are as follows. Each centre will:-

- *Fulfil the statutory definition of a children's centre in its own right.*
- *Provide leadership, management and coordination of integrated children's services within a defined neighbourhood that result in measurable outcomes for children and young people aged pre-birth - 5 years;*
- *Ensure the provision of efficient, high quality parenting and family support services for children aged 0-12;*
- *Improve the delivery of services through work with partners as individuals and/or joint working arrangements that result in measurable improvement in outcomes for children and young people aged 0-19;*
- *Establish appropriate and representative governance arrangements;*
- *Effectively manage the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process at a neighbourhood level;*
- *Manage delegated budgets and resources;*
- *Ensure that services meet national and regulatory standards, including Ofsted and service contract standards.*
- *Ensure effective community participation in the management, delivery and review of services, including children and young people.*

11. The revised core offer for children's centres has been considered within the context of the statutory duties placed on all local authorities to 'improve the well being of children under five

and to reduce inequalities³. Each Local Authority has a statutory duty to secure sufficient children's centres, sufficient childcare places and sufficient early year education places, to a sufficient standard of quality in its area. This is collectively known as the "Early Years Outcomes Duty" under the 2006 Childcare Act and the 2009 Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act.

12. Consultation with a representative sample of families in contact with children's centres from across Nottinghamshire has been undertaken as part of the service review. The findings resulting from this consultation have informed the enhanced core offer.

Future management arrangements - children's centres

13. Cabinet approved in July 2011 the termination, with effect from 1 September 2012, of the current Commissioned Accountable Body agreements with Nottinghamshire County Health Partnership, North Nottinghamshire College and Family Action, and approved a further report to come to County Council setting out future commissioning intentions.

14. To best ensure the consistent delivery of the enhanced core offer for children's centres set out above and at **Appendix 1**, it is proposed that children's centre provision be recommissioned on a County-wide basis.

15. The key features of the proposed commissioning arrangement will be:-

- A service specification that delivers an enhanced model of children and family support focused upon the current network of 58 children's centres;
- The extension of the age range for children's centres' family support from pre birth -12 years, with some services for children and young people 0-19 years;
- The retention, by the Council, of direct responsibility for all children's centre premises and the costs associated with them;
- The retention, by the Council, of a management structure that supports a full commissioning model for children's centre delivery and that will focus upon the rigorous performance management and monitoring of the commissioned arrangements
- An approach to the commissioning and procurement process that will seek to maximise the potential benefits - in both cost and delivery terms - derived from involving third party providers in direct service delivery.

16. It is anticipated that potential bidders for services may include:-

- Existing partners
- National and local charitable organisations
- Other third sector organisations
- Education providers (including schools)

In this respect, initial market testing evidence from other authorities that have undergone, or are undergoing, similar activity, suggests that the level of bidder interest/engagement is likely to be high.

³ Sure Start Children's Centre Core Offer, Department for Education, 2011

17. In procurement terms, it is intended that a “Restricted Procedure” process will be used. This process will enable the Council to select those organisations that are best able to meet technical and contractual requirements through a process involving dialogue and negotiation that will enable the Council to take advantage of opportunities for efficiencies and innovation offered by potential partners. Table 1 below sets out the outline timetable for the commissioning process.

Table 1 - Commissioning Process

Activity	Timescale
Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) Stage	
Issue of PQQ	January 2012
Evaluation of PQQ/shortlisting	February 2012
Invitation to Tender (ITT) Stage	
Preparation of ITT	January/February 2012
ITT issued and clarification discussions	March 2012
ITTs returned	April 2012
ITT Evaluation	April/May 2012
Contract	
Formal approval of contract Award	May 2012
Implementation phase	June - August 2012
Contract Start	September 2012

Other Options Considered

18. As part of the service review process, consideration has been given to two alternative options, these being:-

- The retention of the current arrangements;
- Bringing all children’s centre provision “in house” to the Council.

19. The current arrangements, which have developed over the past decade and which are rooted in the previous Government’s original “Sure Start Local Programme” arrangements for children’s centres, do not provide for effective and consistent performance management or monitoring arrangements. Neither do they allow the Council to effectively control significant areas of children’s centre revenue expenditure, particularly in relation to staffing and property related spend. Equally, the current “mixed economy” approach does not best support the delivery of consistent standards of delivery across the County. For these reasons, this alternative has been discounted.

20. As the Council currently commissions approximately 65% of children’s centre services, the transfer back to the Council of large staff numbers on varying terms and conditions of employment would significantly increase the Council’s staffing related financial risk.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

21. The proposed future commissioning plans will:-

- Best support the effective and consistent performance management of children’s centre delivery, as centre performance will be measured against a detailed service specification based upon the enhanced core offer set out in this report, and the specification for the core service will be consistent across the County;
- Ensure that the Council has effective control of its children’s centre related spend;
- Maximise opportunities for innovation and efficiencies by engaging partners in service delivery;
- Fit directly with the Council’s strategic intent to increase its commissioning focus;
- Enable the Council to directly and effectively control the children’s centre property portfolio.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

23. The Council’s continuing commitment to the retention of a comprehensive network of 58 children’s centres, coupled with the future commissioning of service delivery based around the revised core offer set out in this report, means that children’s centre based services for children and families will be enhanced in terms of scope and quality.

Financial Implications

24. Current spend on Children’s Centre provision through both Commissioned Accountable Bodies and Council operated centres - including staffing, resources and premises related costs - is shown below.

	Current annual spend (2011/12)	Proportion of spend (2011/12)
Commissioned Accountable Bodies	£9.04 million	65%
Council operated centres	£4.95 million	35%

25. Under the proposed recommissioning arrangements, the Council will assume direct responsibility for the premises related management of those children’s centres currently operated by Commissioned Accountable Bodies. The proposed arrangements will also see family information and family support services integrated into children’s centre provision in order to deliver the enhanced core offer.

26. In consequence, the net additional commissioning value is anticipated to be approximately £5m per annum.

27. The proposed commissioning arrangements set out in this report will be undertaken within the revenue budget available to the Early Years and Early Intervention Service, taking into account the revenue savings required of the Service by the Outline Business Cases approved by Council in February 2011.
28. The contractual arrangements that will be established as a result of the commissioning process will make appropriate provision for future revenue funding adjustments, should these be required.
29. Additional external legal advice and sector specialist consultancy costs resulting from the progression of the commissioning process will be met from the Early Years and Early Intervention revenue budget.

Equalities Implications

30. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who don't.
 - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who don't.
31. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions/ changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
32. An EIA has been undertaken and is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

33. The proposed arrangements will continue to ensure that effective safeguarding procedures are followed. Monitoring of safeguarding arrangements will be a core component of the contractual management arrangements that will be established with providers.

Human Resources Implications

34. In the event of the Council procuring a partner or partners for the operation of children's centres, some existing Council staff would be subject to TUPE considerations. The Council will comply with statute and its Human Resource policy framework in dealing with these considerations.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

1) Council approves:-

- The proposed revised core service offer for Nottinghamshire children's centres
 - The proposed future commissioning plans for children's centre provision, with provision focused upon an extended early intervention offer for children and families
- 2) that a further report be brought to Council on the outcome of the procurement exercise prior to the award of contract.

Councillor Philip Owen
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SG 07/12/11)

35. The decision falls within the authority of the County Council.

Financial Comments (NDR 07/12/11)

36. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 24 to 29 of the report.

Background Papers

Revised vision for Early Years and Early Intervention Service
Revised core offer for children's centres
Equality Impact Assessment
Cabinet Report (6 July 2011) - Early Years and Early Intervention Service – Ending current
Commissioned Accountable Body Agreements

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

M19C2914