

19 March 2018

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE INTERIM SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval of the Children's Centre service delivery model from 1st June 2018 – 31st May 2020.
2. To seek approval to review Children's Centre premises to ensure value for money and creation of additional childcare places in areas of poor childcare sufficiency.

Information

Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire

3. Nottinghamshire County Council currently commissions the Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP) to deliver Children's Centre services for families with pre-school children. NCFP is a consortia led by Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust and includes Family Action and North Notts College.
4. The Children's Centre contract was awarded in June 2013 and expires on 31st May 2020. Prior to the contract, Children's Centre services were delivered through a mixed economy by the Council and the component organisations of NCFP, in specific allocated districts, working collaboratively.
5. The Children's Centre service currently offers a range of universal and targeted services and interventions to all families in Nottinghamshire with children under the age of 5 years. The service works to ensure that children and their families have the opportunity to achieve their full potential by having the best start in life. The service is provided from dedicated buildings, outreach work in community venues and home visiting.
6. The core purposes of Children's Centres as defined by the Childcare Act 2006 are:
 - improving child development and school readiness
 - increasing parental aspirations and parenting skills
 - improving child and family health and life chances.

7. Children's Centres use universal activities to bring in many of the families in need of extra support. As families build up confidence and relationships with staff and other service users they often become more receptive to appropriate targeted activities, with 76% of referrals currently coming from parents themselves. The universal services presently offered by Children's Centres include access to antenatal and post-natal health services, stay and play, early learning activities, adult and family learning, volunteering opportunities, community events and trips. Universal services are offered to all families with children under the age of 5 across Nottinghamshire. The service is currently commissioned to register 95% of all children under the age of 5 and to see 65% of these children through services and interventions. By quarter 2 of 2017/18, both targets had already been exceeded (98% are registered and 65% have been seen).
8. The service is currently commissioned to register 95% of children under the age of 5 from low income households and to see 70% of these children through services and interventions. By quarter 2 of 2017/18, both targets had already been exceeded (100% are registered and 72% have been seen). The service also targets the families and children at risk by targeting areas with high levels of disadvantage and key groups at risk of a range of poor outcomes, as well as under-represented groups such as fathers.
9. Nottinghamshire Children's Centres are also commissioned to deliver the Troubled Families Programme for children under 5 years of age, working very closely with the local authority's Family Service to improve outcomes for the whole family. Families with complex or specialist needs are supported in partnership with other services such as Social Care and midwifery services. Children's Centres and the Family Service will also be delivering the new 'Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) Programme' which will employ a local authority lead who will be seconded to the Children's Centre service. The EPEC programme provides a system for training and supervising parent-led parenting groups that help parents to learn practical parenting skills for everyday family life and develop their abilities to bring up confident, happy and co-operative children.
10. The Children's Centre service offers a range of evidence based parenting programmes to support families to manage their child's behaviour, sleep routines, and improve family functioning, amongst others. These programmes are offered to families who have been identified as being in need of additional support.
11. Intensive one-to-one Family Support is also offered to families who require bespoke support to address a variety of issues. This builds on the information provided in the initial referral.
12. Children's Centres work with all parents including fathers, enabling fathers to participate positively in the lives of their children and young people. Having an involved father has been found to be associated with children having better peer relationships, fewer behavioural difficulties, and lower likelihood of criminality and drug use later in life. Children gain from the different qualities which mothers and fathers bring; this is particularly the case for boys.
13. Children's Centres also provide the Home Talk service which is a parent-implemented intervention for children with delayed language development. The service is offered to parents of 2-year-old children who are identified by the Healthy Families team at the 2 –

2½ years universal review. The service is delivered in family homes by trained children's workers, under the professional supervision of a qualified speech and language therapist, to help address environmental issues and identify complex speech, language and communication needs at the earliest opportunity, linking to specialist speech and language services where necessary. For vulnerable families less likely to access specialist services directly, the Children's Centres speech and language therapists provide support locally, in a more accessible environment, building parents' confidence.

14. Within Nottinghamshire, there are 58 Ofsted registered Children's Centres, not all of which have dedicated buildings. Since 2016, Children's Centres have been formed into 18 clusters with one hub and satellite centres with reduced timetables. All clusters operate together to provide outreach work, home visiting, sign posting, centre-led structured activities and groups, support, advice and guidance.

The Impact of Children's Centre Services

15. Since Children's Centres were first launched in 1999, there has been a wealth of national research into both the impact and the reach of Children's Centre services. It is timely therefore to review current service delivery to ensure that interventions reflect evidence of what works to improve outcomes.
16. Nationally, the two main longitudinal research projects were the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) and Evaluation of Children's Centres England (ECCE). They both report a positive impact overall on engaging families with Children's Centres, this in turn helps children to have the best start in life resulting in short term and long term improved outcomes.
17. Both research studies demonstrated that:
 - a) parents evidenced an improved knowledge of child development, lower levels of dysfunction and improved parenting skills
 - b) developmental concerns were predicted earlier on (mean age 14 months) as a direct result of engagement with a Children's Centre
 - c) the greater the family is disadvantaged the increased likelihood that they will engage with services for a longer period (5 months), suggesting families are aware of the support they need and they are actively seeking this out
 - d) parents who accessed a Children's Centre service improved their parenting skills and provided an improved home learning environment
 - e) children had better social development with higher levels of independence and self-regulation
 - f) there were higher immunisation rates, fewer reported accidental injuries and the families engaged more with other family services.
18. Both studies identified that improving household economic status did not improve substantially. When this is considered alongside the findings of local research it is clear that financial stability is a key target area to consider when moving forwards. Participants who took part in local consultation highlighted the need for greater support to prepare

parents for employment and this appears to be a consistent theme throughout national and local reviews and research.

19. The NESS research study identified that improving health outcomes did not improve significantly. It is anticipated that health outcomes will be improved through integrated service delivery arrangements with Healthy Families Teams who are also provided through the NCFP.
20. NCFP prepared an impact report which shows progress since the contract began in 2013. This is available from the NCFP webpages:
<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/sure-start>

Service User Views

21. In 2017, Nottingham Trent University was commissioned to carry out focus groups with local service users to help understand the benefits of the service and what changes, if any, would be required to service delivery. The groups included mothers, fathers, young parents, and parent volunteers. Key findings identified that:
 - a) parents and carers would like to be more involved in running services and volunteering
 - b) additional outreach work with hard to reach groups is required to engage vulnerable families
 - c) there is a need to increase engagement with organisations which support parents into work e.g. Jobcentre Plus
 - d) parents want the service to continue its strong links with healthcare professionals
 - e) Children's Centre properties are not used to their capacity and service users would like to see more services operating in the buildings.

Proposed Delivery Models in Nottinghamshire

22. Using national and local research, consultation findings, local performance data and reports, it is evident that Children's Centres make a positive contribution to the outcomes of children and families, in particular families experiencing disadvantage.
23. For the remaining two years of the Children's Centre contract, it is proposed that the service becomes more targeted, working with families most at risk of poor outcomes and children and families experiencing difficulties such as developmental delay. A proposed core offer for the local Children's Centre Service is attached as **Appendix 1**.

A. Restructured Outcomes

24. Previously, Children's Centres were tasked to contribute to a wide range of outcomes, however as data collection and analysis has improved, these outcomes have been streamlined with a particular focus on local priorities and the areas where Children's Centres can make a difference:

- children achieve a good level of development and are ready for school
- children most at risk of developmental delay are effectively supported to close the attainment gap
- parents are job ready with increased aspirations for themselves and their children
- children and parents have improved emotional health and wellbeing
- the needs of children and their families are identified early and the risk of harm is prevented.

B. Delivery of Universal Services

25. Since the Children's Centre contract was awarded in 2013, there has been a considerable focus on registering and providing services to all children under the age of 5 regardless of their needs and family circumstances. This is no longer sustainable as it is hard to evidence, and it detracts worker capacity away from targeted work with vulnerable families who need additional support.
26. Consultation with service users and the Children's Centre workforce identified that parents themselves were able and willing to facilitate a number of universal services. This option also allows paid workers to prioritise their time to work with children and families most at risk of poor outcomes. It is therefore proposed that universal activities such as 'stay and play' are led by parent volunteers. This proposal subsequently removes targets for Children's Centres to register and see all children under the age of 5.
27. Universal services such as 'self-weigh' and midwifery clinics will continue to be hosted within Children's Centre premises as these are led by Midwifery and Healthy Families Teams.

C. Parent Volunteer Led Activities and Interventions

28. Using feedback from local service users and national research, it is evident that parents and carers want support to be job ready and opportunities to volunteer and take an active role in delivering services. It is therefore proposed that all universal services such as 'stay and play' sessions, breastfeeding support groups, community events and trips could all be volunteer led and self-funded. There will also be continued recruitment and training for parents to deliver some targeted work such as peer support for mothers with post-natal depression, breastfeeding peer support and EPEC parenting programme leaders.
29. This proposal not only empowers parents and communities, but provides opportunities for parents to increase their confidence and skills to aid their transition into employment.

D. Increased Targeting

30. Children's Centres will offer more targeted evidence based interventions such as one to one support and group work programmes, encouraging increased referrals from Social Care, the Family Service, the Healthy Families teams and other specialist and targeted services.
31. The service will continue to co-facilitate programmes with partners from specialist services, such as Women's Aid organisations, deliver evidence based parenting programmes and Speech and Language Therapy services.

32. Children's Centres will be tasked to work with families with children under the age of 5 at risk of poor outcomes as evidenced through the Early Childhood chapter of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. These groups include:
- a) low income families with children under the age of 5
 - b) children of teenage mothers/teenage mothers under the age of 20.
 - c) children under 5 years of age who are known to Children's Social Care
 - d) children under 5 years of age who are known to the Family Service
 - e) families with children under the age of 5 identified as 'Troubled Families'
 - f) unemployed parents of children under 5 years of age (including single parents and those living in rural areas)
 - g) children under 5 with English as an Additional Language
 - h) families identified as having mild/moderate mental health issues
 - i) children under 5 with a language delay
 - j) parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities
 - k) 2 years olds eligible for free school meals
 - l) 3 and 4 year olds from target groups not accessing their universal childcare entitlement (15 hours per week)
 - m) some Black and Ethnic Minority groups at risk of poor levels of development.

E. Increased Focus on Job Readiness

33. Following the publication of national research and local priorities, the service will have an increased focus on preparing unemployed parents for work. Improving social mobility and economic prosperity for low income families is a priority in Nottinghamshire and as such, Children's Centre contributions to this work will be significant.
34. The targeted Children's Centre service model will be commissioned to have closer working relationships with the Department for Work and pensions (DWP) and ensure robust partnership with district DWP teams.

Children's Centre Premises

35. Across the 58 Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire, there are 70 dedicated Children's Centre properties, most of which are owned by the local authority, whilst some are leased from District Councils and voluntary sector organisations. Not all dedicated buildings are utilised to their full capacity with some buildings only offering Children's Centre services once or twice a week, whilst others host childcare provision and have activities available every day of the week and most weekends. Footfall is low in some buildings and management of the Children's Centres premises portfolio costs the local authority £1million a year; suggesting that these properties do not provide best value in many cases.
36. In order to maximise the use of premises, it is proposed that, where feasible, early years providers and schools are invited to lease rooms from the local authority to enable the creation of new childcare places thus enabling the local authority to fulfil its statutory duties. This is particularly pertinent following the roll out of 30 hours funded childcare to 3 and 4 year olds which has created substantial demands for additional childcare provision, which is in addition to existing free entitlements for 2 year olds from low income

households. By providing childcare alongside Children's Centre services, premises will become early childhood centres of excellence, modelling successful centres that already host childcare provision combined with services for families.

Other Options Considered

37. As a result of extending the Children's Centre service contract to 31st May 2020, the local authority and the provider of the service mutually agreed that this was an opportunity to review the service delivery model to focus on interventions that can identify improved outcomes for targeted families. There was an option to continue with the service contract as it was, with the sustained focus on registering all children under the age of 5 regardless of their needs and family circumstances. However, it became evident that the service struggled to measure the impact of the universal services provided which was also reflected in national research and evidence. Combined with consultation findings with service users and the Children's Centre workforce, it was evident that parents themselves were able and willing to facilitate a number of universal services, not only providing peer support, but also providing opportunities to volunteer and prepare parents for work. This option also allows paid workers to spend more time working with children and families most at risk of poor outcomes.

Reason for Recommendation

38. In light of published research, local consultation findings and performance data, it is important to review the current contract for Children's Centre services to ensure that the local authority is focusing on elements of work that are known to make a positive difference and better reflect local priorities such as economic prosperity and social mobility.

Statutory and Policy Implications

39. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, 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, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

40. The Council has an information sharing agreement in place with Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust which allows the sharing of child and family level data with Children's Centres and the Family Nurse Partnership. The agreement allows the facilitation of data sharing to improve the services provided for the wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

41. Commissioners within the local authority are working closely with Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust to ensure that new General Data Protection Regulations are addressed and followed; this includes data retention and responding to information breaches.

Financial Implications

42. Following a budget reduction of £3million in 2016, the Children's Centre contract in Nottinghamshire is currently £10.8 million. This is more than double the budget of statistical and regional local authority neighbours.
43. There is no planned financial reduction across Early Help services but a realignment of some activities across Children's Centres and the Family Service. This realignment will include a budget transfer of £420,000 in 2018/19 and £500,000 in 2019/20. This funding will be used to create capacity in the Family Service to support the transition of cases, implementation of whole family assessments and proactive outreach work to engage hard to reach families through close working with Children's Centres. Funding will also be used to enable the implementation of the new Empowering Parents Empowering Communities Programme working across both services with a worker seconded to Children's Centre services alongside funding for crèche provision. A further report to Committee from the Family Service will be developed to confirm these plans. The contract value for Children's Centres will therefore be £10.4m in 2018- 2019 and £10.3m in 2019-2020.
44. Where early years providers use Children's Centre properties for the delivery of childcare places, it is proposed that they pay their contribution to overhead costs including utility bills, cleaning and maintenance.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

45. As the service becomes more targeted, there is an expectation that increasing numbers of children and families known to Social Care and the Family Service will be referred to the service to enable them to access interventions that support parenting skills, sleep routines etc. Children's Centres are already a key agency working with the most vulnerable families, and they will also endeavour to reduce referrals to Social Care and reduce the number of children being taken into local authority care. Safeguarding will continue to be a key focus of performance management arrangements.
46. There will be a substantial increase in the number of parents who are recruited, trained and supported to be volunteers, with an ongoing requirement to ensure that all volunteers have undergone relevant security checks and safeguarding training and supervision.
47. By continuing to offer universal services, albeit led by volunteers, it is anticipated that any emerging needs will be identified early and families will be referred to the most appropriate professional within the Children's Centre service. Community Involvement workers within NCFP will be tasked to support parent volunteers and the volunteers will be mentored by Children's Centre staff with relevant roles.

Implications for Service Users

48. The Children's Centre service in Nottinghamshire will engage increasing numbers of children and families who are considered to be at risk of poor outcomes. All parents will

still be able to access universal services within centres, however these will now be led by parent volunteers. There should be no negative implication for service users.

49. Vulnerable children and families who access Children's Centre services will see improvements in a range of outcomes, including increased confidence, improved emotional health and wellbeing, improved family dynamics, lower levels of dysfunction, improved parenting skills, sustained employment, and improved health and wellbeing. Children in particular will achieve a good level of development and be ready for school which is a key priority in Nottinghamshire.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 1) approves the proposed revised model for the Nottinghamshire Children's Centre service contract.
- 2) approves plans to review Children's Centre premises to ensure value for money and creation of additional childcare places in areas of poor childcare sufficiency.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 22/02/18)

50. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of their terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SS 02/03/18)

51. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraphs 42 – 44 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.

Parkes, Y, Bailey D (2018) 'A review of Sure Start Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire' Nottingham Trent University

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

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