

13<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Agenda Item: 12

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **PROPOSED CONSULTATION ON THE USE OF RETFORD CENTRAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

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

1. The report seeks approval from Committee to launch local consultation regarding the future use of the Retford Central Children's Centre with findings and proposals brought back to Committee for consideration and approval in December 2021.
2. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, Committee is asked to review findings from the consultation to agree a change in use of the premises at Committee in December. If consultation recommends that the premises become a Maternity Hub (Option 2), colleagues in Place department will be tasked to progress a lease.

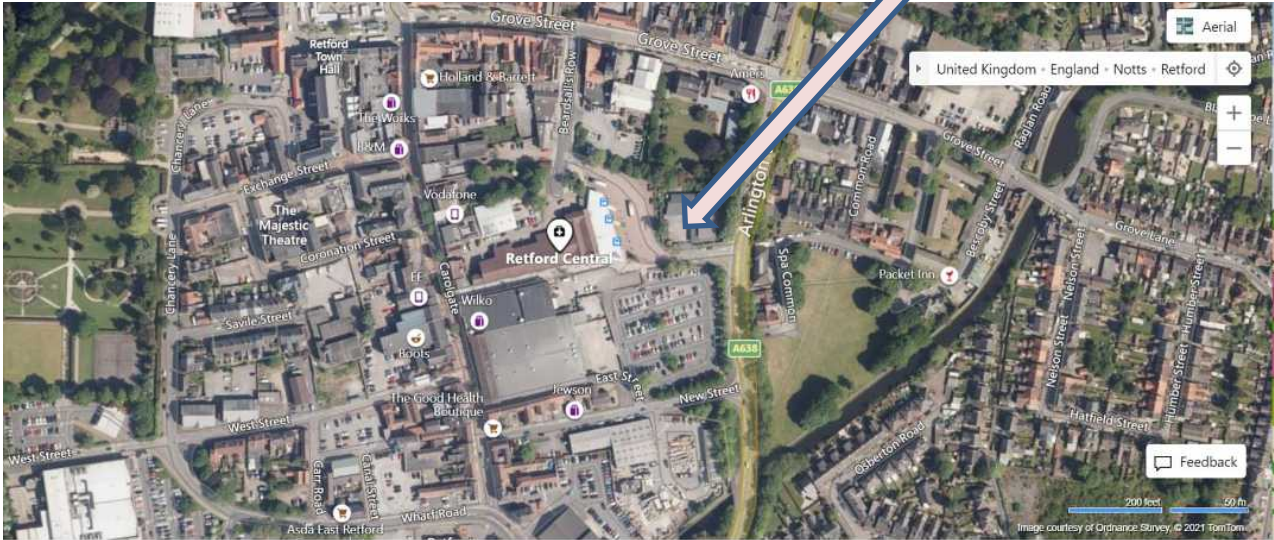
#### **Information**

##### **Children's Centre Service Property Portfolio**

3. The Children's Centre Service is delivered through a network of premises and properties across Nottinghamshire, with increasing amounts of work being delivered through outreach work including home visits. Since 2018, the Children's Centre Service has been more targeted which has meant that the staff carry out a lot more outreach work and support families in their own home to engage harder to reach families. The service is not focused just on buildings and engaging only the parents that walk through the door.
4. To ensure families have local access to a range of services to suit their needs, the Children's Centre Service properties have always hosted sessions and clinics delivered by relevant service providers. Since the move to a more targeted service, more space has been available on the timetable for such services, whilst still ensuring sufficient space for the Children's Centre Service's own provision. Several Children's Centre Service properties host childcare provision to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient high-quality childcare; many also host midwifery clinics and appointments for families to meet their health visitor.

## Retford Central Children's Centre

- Retford Central Children's Centre is located adjacent to Retford Young People's Centre, behind the bus station in Retford. Both buildings share a small car park and service the community of Retford located within walking distance of St Saviours Estate which is identified as a priority neighbourhood. The building is also situated near a large public car park.



- The Retford Central Children's Centre property is owned by the Council with running costs of approximately £17,500 per annum. This includes cleaning and caretaking, utility bills, maintenance etc.
- In 2017/18, Family Action was awarded a lease to operate from Retford Central Children's Centre to provide childcare through their new 'Tall Trees Pre-School' for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds. They officially opened in April 2018; at this time, Children's Centre staff relocated to Hallcroft Children's Centre in Retford to free up space for the childcare provision. Most Children's Centre services were also relocated to Hallcroft Children's Centre. The Children's Centre Service retained some space in the building for 1-2-1 and family appointments and the midwifery team from Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust continued to offer appointments once a week from the centre.
- Unfortunately, Tall Trees Preschool was not viable, and they closed on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.
- Since January 2020, the property continued to be used for Children's Centre Service appointments and midwifery clinics although Children's Centre Service face to face appointments were reduced during lockdown. In March 2020, Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust approached the Council property team with a view to leasing all the building to create a local 'Maternity Hub'. This request was very much in line with their Covid restrictions at the time and the greater need to see vulnerable patients away from hospital sites.
- As advised by Strategic Property colleagues, a room hire agreement was devised by the Council's Legal Services and was issued to Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to enable them to use the building Mondays to Fridays pending formal consultation about the use of the property.

## Family Hubs

11. In October 2020, a Family Hubs partnership group was established as a subgroup of the Early Help Executive Group. The purpose of the group was to plan the development of Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire in line with central government ambitions.
12. Local authorities are encouraged to establish Family Hubs which are being championed by a number of bodies such as the Children's Commissioner, and Government Departments and initiatives including 'Supporting Families' (formerly Troubled Families). Family Hubs are also a key feature in the Best Start for Life Review by Andrea Leadsom MP who asks that all Family Hubs include a specific 'start for life offer'.

*Family Hubs are local support centres where families with children and young people aged 0-19 can access a broad range of services to overcome difficulties and build stronger relationships amongst family members. Often co-located with early years' health care and support in children's centres, if not they are found in schools and community centres, they also signpost and seek to integrate with services located at other delivery sites. Family Hub services have a range of objectives, varying from area to area, but will broadly speaking provide early help and intervention for families with the aim of improving education, health and public service outcomes for children and adult members of the family (LGIU 2021).*

13. Family Hubs aim to provide help for families on a range of issues, e.g.:
  - Helping parents overcome the problems they are facing such as difficulties in their relationships, finances, and other areas of family life
  - Help to improve the confidence, skills, and wellbeing of children in need
  - Children from poorly functioning families who are often underachieving in school, have poor physical and mental health and who are more likely as they get older to become caught up in drugs, gangs, and other criminal activity
  - Couples, including those who have separated, in chronic conflict, struggling to resolve difficulties and provide their children with the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships they need to thrive
  - Families coping with disabilities unaware of the help that is available to them locally or how to access it.
14. In Nottinghamshire we understand that the needs of young people are different, and it is unlikely that they will attend a Family Hub unless it is young people friendly and designed with them. Young People's Centres will be a crucial part of the Family Hub network in Nottinghamshire.
15. The national Family Hubs Network uses the following principles when planning and delivering Family Hubs:
  - An understanding of the importance of Early Help and prevention

- Families with children aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) have somewhere they know they can go if they need information, advice, or guidance
  - Provision for children's early years (0-5) so their families get whatever help they need to give them the best start in life and ensure they are school-ready
  - Integrated health and public health priorities, such as health visiting and maternity, with social services and Troubled Families programmes
  - A central access point to services and support, connected to all other delivery sites in the area
  - A relational culture embodied by everyone who works in the Hub
  - A whole-family approach that focuses on disadvantaged and vulnerable children
  - Access to relationship support when there is conflict, not just help with parenting
  - The voluntary sector and wider community make an extensive and vital contribution.
16. In March 2021, the Family Hubs Group agreed that the preferred model for Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire would be a hub and spoke model using a combination of physical and virtual support and activities, a hub being a physical building and the spokes being a combination of services and physical assets such as schools, district council offices, youth clubs, as well as websites, virtual support, and call centres. There will also be two main virtual Family Hubs which will be the Early Help Unit as the 'early help front door', and Notts Help Yourself which provides a range of information and resources for families.
17. In May - July 2021, the Family Hubs Group reviewed local data and intelligence from District and Borough Councils to confirm priority neighbourhoods where Family Hubs could be piloted, these are defined either as 'wards' and/or 'estates'.
18. As Retford Central Children's Centre building is located near a priority neighbourhood, in an accessible site shared with the Young People's Centre, the Family Hubs partnership Group is keen to consult with local families and young people to understand if the site would be an appropriate Family Hub.

## **Maternity Hubs**

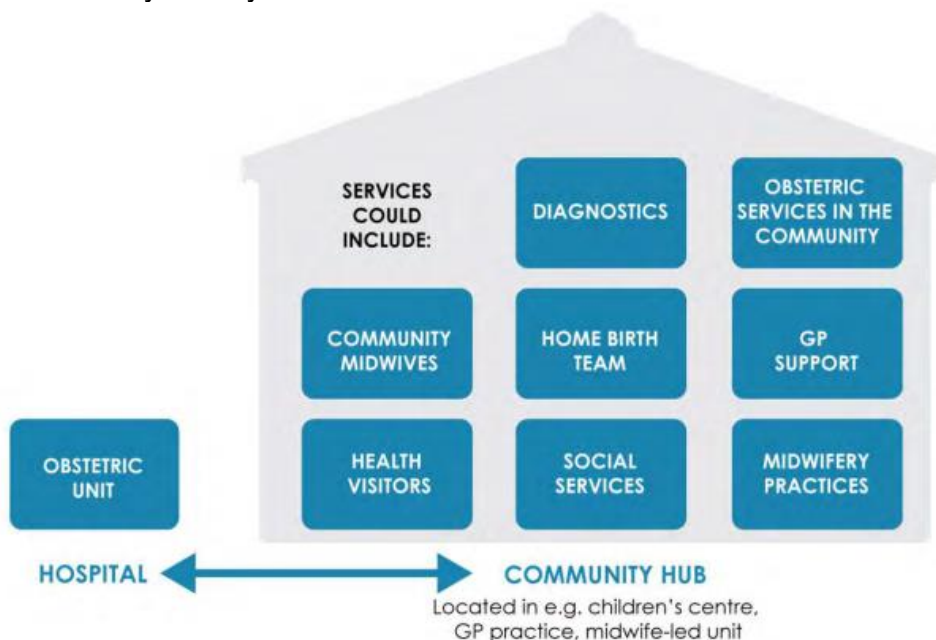
19. The option to create a Maternity Hub in Retford follows the NHS England National Maternity Review<sup>1</sup> carried out in 2015 by an independent panel of experts led by Baroness Julia Cumberlege. The review set out wide-ranging proposals designed to make care safer and give women greater control and more choices.
20. The review states that Maternity Community Hubs should be established, where maternity services, particularly ante- and postnatally, are provided alongside other family-orientated

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<sup>1</sup> NHS England (2015) 'Better Births – improving outcomes of maternity services in England' [national-maternity-review-report.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/national-maternity-review-report.pdf)

health and social services provided by statutory and voluntary agencies. The proposal for Retford Central is to call this a Maternity Hub.

21. The concept of a Maternity Hub is that it is a local centre where women can access various elements of their maternity care. They could be located in a children's centre, or in a freestanding midwifery unit. Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are already regular users of Children's Centre Service properties in Bassetlaw and if the property is changed to a Maternity Hub, this will be identified as a free standing midwifery unit.
22. Different providers of care can work from a Maternity Hub, offering midwifery, obstetric and other services easily accessible for women. These might be ultrasound services, smoking cessation services or voluntary services providing peer support. Women may also be able to meet professionals who will be involved with them after childbirth, for example, their health visitor. It is proposed that the Children's Centre Service will retain a room at the building if it was to become a Maternity Hub, this space will also be used by Health Visitors from the Healthy Family Team.



23. Maternity Community hubs will have two key purposes:
  - To act as 'one stop shops' for many services. This means different teams operating out of the same facility. Bringing services together in this way will make it easier for women to get the care they need, and achieve the choices they want.
  - To provide a fast and effective referral service to the right expert if a woman and her baby need more specialised services. If a woman and/or her baby need specialist care or develop a complication, she will be referred quickly to her obstetrician (with whom the midwifery team has an existing working relationship). Or if she has or develops a mental health condition, she will be offered appropriate care.

24. Creating a Maternity Hub is very much in line with the Health and Wellbeing Board's Best Start Strategy<sup>2</sup> and increased focused on working with children during their first 1,001 Days.

### **Proposals for the Retford Central Children's Centre property**

25. Early Childhood Services who manage the building are required to consult with the public if any change is proposed to a Children's Centre property.
26. This report seeks permission to embark on local consultation to confirm the preference of local families (including expectant parents, young people and parents of children and young people aged 0-19, and parents of young people aged 19-25 with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities), on the following two options:
- **Option 1 – Family Hub:** To change the use of the building so it includes a wider range of services for families (including weekly maternity clinics), and the whole site becomes a Family Hub. Option 1 will provide opportunities for more Council service delivery such as use by Family Service and Children's Centre Service, as well as partner led services such as appointments to discuss substance use, emotional health, work readiness etc. Responsibility for the day to day management and funding of the building will remain with the Council.
  - **Option 2 – Maternity Hub:**  
To create a local Maternity Hub to be managed and delivered by Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. This will provide an opportunity for frequent Parent Education Programme classes and groups as well as daily clinics and appointments. Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust will also continue to provide clinics in other Children's Centre Service buildings. The Council's Children's Centre Service intends to retain a small room to enable the service to continue to offer family and 1-2-1 appointments whilst activities remain in the nearby Hallcroft Children's Centre and through continued outreach work. Responsibility for the day to day management and funding of the building will fall to Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
27. If consultation findings identify that a Family Hub (Option 1) is the preferred option, additional work will take place in the locality with children, parents/carers, young people, and local stakeholders to confirm what will be provided, how and by whom. We anticipate that the District Council, voluntary sector, and community and acute health providers will be engaged in planning and delivery. If this option is approved, it will be Nottinghamshire's first Family Hub pilot.
28. If the Family Hub (Option 1) is progressed, the cost of running the building will remain with the Council, but service users who hire rooms on a regular basis will be asked to contribute towards the running costs of the building. Users of the building will be asked to sign a room hire agreement.
29. If the consultation identifies that local families prefer for the centre to be a dedicated Maternity Hub (Option 2), work will be undertaken by colleagues in Property and Estates to progress a formal lease for Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS

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<sup>2</sup> [nottinghamshire-best-start-strategy-2021-2025.pdf](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/10000/nottinghamshire-best-start-strategy-2021-2025.pdf)

Foundation Trust to enable them to lease the whole site pending a decision at Economic Development and Asset Management Committee or an Operational Decision. The building will remain a physical asset of the Council and Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust will seek landlords consent for any structural changes they wish to invest in.

### **Other Options Considered**

30. The only other option available to the Council is to declare the property as surplus and colleagues in Property and Estates asked to find an alternative tenant.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

31. Any planned change of use of a Children's Centre property is subject to public consultation with local families and stakeholders. The two options for the use of the property are a change in use so the views of local families must be sought as detailed in the Statutory Guidance Section 5D and outlined in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009).

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

32. 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.

### **Financial Implications**

33. The Children's Centre property budget is managed by the Place Department at £1.1 million per annum and this will remain unchanged.
34. If Option 1 is progressed so that the site becomes a Family Hub, the Council will be expected to continue to pay for running costs. Some of these costs will be offset by charging a room hire for some partners who intend to use the building on a regular basis. This historically has not been in place for Children's Centre Service buildings, who have permitted free use of the building to partner services who work to meet the same intended objectives for families with preschool children. This means that maternity services and others have previously been able to use the buildings for free. Further work may be required to firm up funding arrangements for physical Family Hubs and this will be dealt with in a future report to Committee on Family Hubs.
35. If Option 2 is progressed so that the site becomes a Maternity Hub, the vacation of this property by the Council will result in a cost saving of approximately £18,000 in a full year, to the Children's Centre property budget held by Place Department. This will alleviate some of the pressure on that budget which is currently forecasting an overspend of approximately £19,000.

36. Changing the use of a Children's Centre Service property funded from the Department for Education Sure Start Children's Centre Capital Grant may carry a clawback risk, however the risk is mitigated if at least 50% of the property is used for families with preschool children. The Council is awaiting clarity from the Department for Education regarding any clawback risk if a Children's Centre Service building becomes a Family Hub (Option 1). There would be no clawback risk if the property becomes a Maternity Hub (Option 2), since services would continue to be predominantly for children under 5 and their families.

### **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

37. Consultation will ensure that the views of families are gathered to shape the delivery of services from the building. Any users of the property will be required to safeguard children and families as a condition of a lease or room hire agreement.

### **Implications for Service Users**

38. The views of local families will shape service developments so it is anticipated that the outcome of the consultation will benefit the local community and local families by identifying and addressing their needs.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

39. The consultation will be carried out online on the Council's Citizen Space, this will be promoted to all organisations in the area working with expectant parents, and families with children aged 0-19; as well as stakeholders from the District Council and Parish Council. These stakeholders will be asked to promote the consultation to their service users and families living in Retford. The Council will also promote the consultation through social media channels.
40. Hard copy questionnaires will also be provided for those without internet access, and will be sent to key stakeholders to pass to families. The questionnaire will also be made available in a variety of languages on request.
41. An Equalities Impact Assessment has also been completed.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Committee:

- 1) approves the pending consultation exercise which will inform the change in the use of the Retford Central Children's Centre building to become a Family Hub (Option 1) or a Maternity Hub (Option 2)
- 2) reviews the findings of the consultation exercise at the December meeting of the Committee and makes recommendations to colleagues in Property and Estates to progress a lease if the preferred option is to create a Maternity Hub.

**Laurence Jones**  
**Service Director, Commissioning and Resources**



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

Irene Kakoullis  
Group Manager, Early Childhood Services  
T: 0115 97 74431  
E: [Irene.kakoullis@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:Irene.kakoullis@nottscc.gov.uk)

**Constitutional Comments (CEH 18/08/21)**

42. The report and recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

**Financial Comments (CDS 19/08/21)**

43. There are no financial implications arising directly from undertaking the proposed consultation exercise.
44. Ultimately, any cost savings/income as detailed in **paragraphs 34-36** would accrue to the Children's Centre property budget that is managed by the Place Department, circa £1.1million per annum. This would be subject to a future committee report and clarification of any potential clawback risk.

**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.

[Maximising the value of Nottinghamshire's Children's Centre Services – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 19th March 2018](#)

Children and Young People's Committee 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021 [Nottinghamshire Early Help Strategy 2021-2025](#)

Change of use for Retford Central Children's Centre Equalities Impact Assessment  
<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-working/equality/completed-equality-impact-assessments-eqias>

**Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

Retford East	Cllr Mike Introna
Retford West	Cllr Mike Quigley

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