

10th February 2020

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

CHILDREN'S CENTRE PROPERTY PROPOSALS

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval of the proposal to change the use of three Children's Centre premises to ensure that the property portfolio evidences value for money whilst meeting local needs.

Information

Children's Centre Service Property Portfolio

2. 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 hard to reach families. The service is not focused just on buildings and engaging only the parents that walk through the door.
3. A number of Children's Centre premises are underused and costly to maintain. In order to ensure the Council maximises the use of Children's Centre premises and ensures value for money, it was agreed at Committee in March 2018 that the property portfolio would be reviewed to reduce overhead costs and to create additional childcare places in areas of poor childcare sufficiency.
4. Most properties have part-time timetables which reflect the targeted nature of the service and the need for Children's Centre workers to deliver outreach work to engage the most vulnerable families. Opening times are dependent on local needs and footfall figures. Each centre advertises its opening hours to local parents but are also open at other times to deliver specific 'closed' sessions and parenting programmes.
5. It is proposed that the following properties cease to be dedicated Children's Centres in 2020/21:

CC Site	Landlord	Rationale
Bellamy Children's Centre, Mansfield	Mansfield District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a leased property with an average annual running cost of £22,000 per annum, despite Mansfield District Council agreeing a 'peppercorn rent'. • The service only operates from the property for two 2-hour sessions per week. • There is low footfall and it has been consistently hard to encourage parents to attend this site. A footfall exercise identified 77 children accessed the property over a month, however only 6 of these accessed Children's Centre activities and the remainder attended to access on-site childcare. • Local consultation was carried out in 2016 and confirmed that parents would like the property to be used for childcare and 60% of parents said they would be happy to access the Children's Centre Service from other venues. • A childcare provider operated from this site until the end of Summer term 2019, however their business became unsustainable when the local school set up their own early years provision. The school is now lowering its age range to include 2-year olds to help address childcare sufficiency issues. • Additional consultation was completed in January 2020 with local service users to confirm proposals to vacate the property and identify alternative delivery sites. Findings identified that 100% (7parents and 2 parent volunteers who completed the survey) would like the Council to retain this property, and three alternative sites were suggested by parents. However, the consultation identified that only 2 of the parents who completed the survey were local residents. • Despite findings, this property does not evidence value for money. • 100% of parents access the 'Under 1's' group provided by the service, and self-weigh which is provided by Healthy Family Teams. Self weigh will be relocated by the Healthcare Trust and the 'Under 1's' group will be provided in local venues following additional discussion with local parents. • There is potential for the Council to work with Mansfield District Council and the local Clinical Commissioning Group to explore wider use of this property by residents in Bellamy, this could include sessional Children's Centre activities where rooms are rented when required. • Notice period: 6 months.
Huthwaite Children's Centre (All Saints Centre) Ashfield	All Saints Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a leased property with an average annual running cost of £32,000 per annum. • The building is not in an area of deprivation. • The school led childcare provided within the Children's Centre part of the site will be relocating to the school following school expansion. • Local consultation has taken place alongside proposals to extend local school provision, and further consultation with local

		<p>service users was completed in January 2020 to confirm proposals to vacate the property and identify alternative delivery sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 responses were received which included 7 parents and the remaining responses were from workers. • The consultation identified 45% of respondents agreed with the proposal to vacate this site and for the Council to hire rooms from the All Saints Centre as required to retain a presence at the Centre. 45% of respondents disagreed and 10% neither agreed or disagreed. • 86% of parents who responded access the property for the 'Under 1's' group provided by the service, with 42% accessing the property to access the community café which is provided by the All Saints Centre. • The landlord has already identified alternative tenants and has agreed to allow the Council to rent rooms as required which could include the 'Under 1's' group. • Notice period: 12 months
Beeston Central Children's Centre, Broxtowe	Notts County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building is owned by the Council with an average annual running cost of £30,500. • Local consultation was carried out in January 2019 and identified that many parents thought the building had closed, and 96% of parents felt that the service could be provided in a variety of community buildings instead. • A footfall exercise in February 2019 identified that no parents accessed the property during this time. • Alternative uses by the Council are being scoped. • The Children's Centre Service will rent rooms in the Youth and Community Centre next door to run sessions when required.

6. If proposals are approved, the Children's Centre Service in these three localities will continue to be provided but not from dedicated Children's Centre buildings, and instead from a range of accessible community venues and in people's homes. In some cases, the Council will still be able to use the property when required. There is no planned reduction to service delivery.
7. Committee is asked to approve the proposal for the Children's Centre Service to vacate these three premises so the Council may continue to engage children and families who require early support while services are delivered from a range of accessible community venues and in people's homes. This will result in a cost saving of approximately £84,500, 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 £190,000.
8. The ongoing review of the Children's Centre Property portfolio will continue, as agreed at Children and Young People's Committee in March 2018. Reviews will ensure that properties evidence value for money and meet childcare sufficiency and school place planning requirements; any proposed changes to Children's Centre properties will be subject to local service user consultation.

Other Options Considered

9. The option to retain all properties has been considered, however the three properties listed above do not evidence value for money and savings will be used to offset some of the property budget overspend.

Reason for Recommendations

10. The Children's Centre Service is currently provided in dedicated Children's Centre premises, community venues and people's homes. Some Children's Centres do not evidence value for money and are located in areas that are not considered to be disadvantaged, so in order to engage the most vulnerable families, and to increase opportunities for home learning, the number of dedicated properties is no longer required.
11. An increased targeted approach is required as nearly 50% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds have not secured the essential skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they finish Reception Year. Many have reduced opportunities for home learning and parental engagement (Ofsted 2016). It is important therefore to carry out additional outreach work to engage these families and not assume that they will access a Children's Centre building.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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

13. The Children's Centre property budget is managed by the Place Department at £1.0 million per annum and this will remain unchanged.
14. The vacation of the three properties in **paragraph 4** will result in a cost saving of approximately £84,500, 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 £190,000.
15. Renting rooms in community venues to deliver sessions will be funded through the core Children's Centre Service budget and will only be booked when rooms are needed by the service. It is not yet known what the demand for this will be or the associated costs although they are not expected to be significant.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

16. There is an expectation that children and families will experience an improved package of support from the Council by engaging families most in need.

Implications for Service Users

17. The Children's Centre Service in Nottinghamshire will continue to engage children and families who require early support and are considered to be at risk of poor outcomes. The following target groups will continue to be supported:
 - a) low income families with identified needs
 - b) children of teenage parents / teenage parents (excluding those already accessing the Family Nurse Partnership)
 - c) families identified as having mild/moderate mental health issues
 - d) children with English as an additional language
 - e) 2, 3 and 4 year olds not accessing their minimum childcare entitlement
 - f) unemployed single parents
 - g) unemployed parents living in rural areas
 - h) children under 5 years with speech, language and communication needs
 - i) Black and Minority Ethnic groups where there is a need
 - j) parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not meet thresholds for specialist services
 - k) families with children on child protection plans, Children in Need and Looked After Children.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

18. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed to review and mitigate any risks associated with the proposals to vacate three properties. There will be small numbers of parents who are negatively affected by these proposals as small numbers use these properties, however, activities and services will continue to be provided in different venues or held less frequently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That Committee approves the proposal for the Children's Centre Service to vacate the three premises referred to in this report and for services to continue to be delivered from a range of accessible community venues and in people's homes.

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@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (EP 21/01/20)

19. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 22/01/20)

20. The vacation of the three properties in **paragraph 4** will result in a cost saving of approximately £84,500, in a full year (2021/22), 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 £190,000.
21. Renting rooms in community venues to deliver sessions will be funded through the core Children's Centre Service budget and will only be booked when rooms are needed by the service. It is not yet known what the demand for this will be or the associated costs although they are not expected to be significant. The Children's Centre budget, in a full year, will be £9.4m.
22. There is a £1.0 million budget for Children's Centre property management which is managed by the Place Department and will be unchanged.

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](#)

[Early Years provision in Nottinghamshire County Council owned properties – occupational costs – report to Policy Committee on 16th May 2018](#)

Children's Centre Property Proposals Equality Impact Assessment 2020

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-working/equality/completed-equality-impact-assessments-eqias>

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

C1346