

18 March 2018**Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICE CONTRACT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval of the proposal to bring the Children's Centre Service back into the management of the Council from 1st June 2020 following the end of the contract with an external provider. A further report with the proposed structure and budget will be brought before the relevant Committee for approval once the relevant financial information is available.

Information**Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire**

2. Nottinghamshire County Council currently commissions the Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP) to deliver the Children's Centre Service for families with pre-school children. NCFP is a partnership led by Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust and includes Family Action and North Notts College.
3. The Children's Centre contract was awarded in June 2013 and expires on 31st May 2020, with a contract value of £10.4 million per annum. Prior to the contract, the Children's Centre Service was delivered through a mixed economy by the Council and the component organisations of NCFP, in specific allocated districts, working collaboratively.
4. Since September 2018, the Children's Centre Service has been targeting children and families at risk of poor outcomes and the service is no longer available universally unless parents attend volunteer led universal groups. The decision to proceed with this targeted model was agreed at Committee in March 2018.

Proposal

5. Options for the Service from June 2020 have been explored and rather than re-procure a new Children's Centre Service contract from the 1st June 2020, it is proposed to bring the service back under the management of the Council to be provided through Early Childhood Services within Children and Families Services.

6. Bringing the service back under the management of the Council will not change the targeted Children's Centre Service offer and the following outcomes will remain in place:
 - a) children achieve a good level of development, are ready for school and are effectively supported to close the attainment gap
 - b) parents are job ready and economically active, with increased aspiration for themselves and their children
 - c) improved health and wellbeing of children and parents
 - d) early identification and prevention of risk of harm.
7. Further work is taking place to create a proposed service delivery model which will require approval at the relevant Committee in due course.

Children's Centre Service Property Portfolio

8. The Children's Centre Service is delivered through a network of premises and properties across Nottinghamshire, and the majority of work is now delivered through outreach work including home visits. 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 ensure value for money, it was agreed at Committee in March 2018 that the property portfolio will be reviewed to reduce overhead costs and to create additional childcare places in areas of poor childcare sufficiency.
9. This work is underway, and since March 2018, Early Childhood Services have created an additional 94 full time and 24 part time childcare places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds using five Children's Centre properties. An additional property has been used to accommodate an existing local childcare provider. This childcare provision runs alongside Children's Centre Service activities and income generated through service charges is being used to maintain properties.
10. It is anticipated that this work will continue and will focus on premises with low footfall and/or in areas of poor childcare sufficiency. Local consultation will continue to be facilitated for each property under review.

Other Options Considered

11. The option to re-procure the service has been explored, however as the contract is due to end in June 2020, this has created an opportunity for the Council to consider how best to integrate activity into core work of Children and Families Services to enable improved whole family working and subsequently improve outcomes for children and families.

Reason for Recommendation

12. The benefits of the proposal to bring the service in house include:
 - a) greater alignment with existing activity to improve attainment in the early years, and target children most at risk of developmental delay
 - b) greater alignment with existing early help and family support services within the Council streamlined processes

- c) greater alignment with Council services which focus on employment and work skills
- d) provide the opportunity for the council to continually maximise our resources to ensure that families get the support they need.
- e) improved joint work with Council services supporting families with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- f) enhanced use of Children's Centre properties which will host childcare provision, with additional opportunities to also host some Council early help services
- g) increased use of the Mosaic database to better support children and families. This will help to ensure that lead professionals are better equipped to understand the needs of families with children of all ages, including whole family assessments, the support required, access to support and monitoring progress.

Statutory and Policy Implications

- 13. 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

- 14. The Council has an information sharing agreement in place with Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust which allows the sharing of child and family level data. The agreement allows the facilitation of data sharing to improve the services provided for the wellbeing of children, young people and their families. The Information Sharing Agreement will be used to transfer appropriate data and records from the NHS to the Council.
- 15. An Information Sharing Agreement may be required to enable the existing providers of the service to share workforce data as part of the TUPE process. This will be confirmed and actioned as required.
- 16. If the service is brought in house all Children's Centre Service workers will be required to use Mosaic to record case notes and outcomes. This will reduce the risk of data breaches and will enable the wider Children and Families Service workforce to access additional information. The Children's Centre Service workforce will also be required to undertake all mandatory General Data Protection Regulation training and follow Council policies and procedures.

Financial Implications

- 17. The report highlights a number of potential benefits of bringing the service under the management of the Council. At present the full financial implications of bringing the service

in house are not fully known and further work is required to develop an operational structure and identify any implementation costs. Initial work has identified a number of key areas where additional implementation costs will be incurred:

- a. Costs associated with the TUPE transfer of staff, pension liabilities, ICT devices and infrastructure, staff induction and training.
 - b. The current operating model allows some level of business rates relief due to the charitable status of the voluntary sector partner. This relief will be lost if the properties are solely used by the local authority and not the voluntary sector.
 - c. Other programme related costs including project management, legal and HR advice.
18. The review of the Children's Centre service set out in the report may potentially deliver savings but the timing and quantum will depend on the new service delivery model and the implementation costs. A further report to Committee will be required to confirm the structure, operating budget, implementation costs and source of funding once due diligence is completed.
19. Where early years providers use Children's Centre properties for the delivery of childcare places, they will continue to pay their contribution to overhead costs including utility bills, cleaning and maintenance rather than be charged a 'rent; they will also be required to pay Business Rates unless they are a voluntary sector early years provider. This direction of travel was agreed at Policy Committee in 16th May 2018 where it was agreed that the Council charge Ofsted registered childcare providers a service charge to cover overhead costs only. This follows the need to ensure the Council fulfils its statutory duty to provide sufficient high quality childcare places.

Human Resources Implications

20. Bringing the Children's Centre Service back under the management of the Council will result in the TUPE of substantial numbers of workers into the Council from the organisations who currently provide the service. It is too early to confirm the number of staff involved, salary and pension requirements and this information will be confirmed at a subsequent Committee following discussions with the current provider of the service.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

21. If the service is brought back in house, there is an expectation that children and families will experience an improved package of support from the Council by working with the whole family using one records management system (i.e. Mosaic)

Implications for Service Users

22. 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 SEND who do not meet thresholds for specialist services
- k) families with children on child protection plans, Children in Need and Looked After Children.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1) the proposal to bring the Children's Centre Service back into the management of the Council from 1st June 2020 be approved, provided that a further report on the proposed in-house service delivery model and budget be brought to the relevant Committee for approval.

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@nottsgov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LW 19/02/19)

- 23. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SAS 01/03/19)

24. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 19 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.

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 16 May 2018

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

C1218