

RE-CONFIGURING CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **4th March 2014**

From: **Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **2014/25** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **To present to Cabinet the final proposals to reduce the Children's Centres budget by £1.5m (excluding re-investments) and reconfigure the Children's Centre delivery model.**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is recommended to:**

- a) Consider the proposed amendments and approve the final proposals (see the confidential Appendix 2 for full details)**
- b) Give permission to release the response to the formal consultation to reduce the Children's Centres budget by £1.5m (excluding re-investments) and reconfigure the service delivery model accordingly during 2014/15 and 2015/16.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report and the confidential Appendix 2 is to update Cabinet on the feedback that we have received following closure of the Children's Centre formal consultation and to set out the final plans for approval by Cabinet.
- 1.2 A formal consultation was launched on Monday 25th November 2013 which outlined proposals to reconfigure Children's Centres by grouping Cambridgeshire's 40 individual Children's Centres to create 12 clusters and achieve £1.5m savings in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The formal consultation proposed that each Children's Centre cluster would have a merged and flexible service delivery structure utilising Children's Centre buildings where possible together with other community-based venues.

2. FEEDBACK FROM THE FORMAL CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Following release of the formal consultation in November 2013, we sought to ensure that all staff and stakeholders were fully aware of the proposals, and to provide as much opportunity as possible to receive comments and feedback to help shape the final decisions. We therefore planned a range of events and opportunities to promote discussion and encourage comment including:
- Formal consultation staff and stakeholder events
 - Business Support Workshop
 - Members were invited to meet with their respective Locality Manager
 - Union Briefings
 - An online survey comprised of 12 questions was devised in order to seek feedback from Cambridgeshire families and the wider public about the proposed changes to Children's Centres
 - Children's Centres were also provided with posters to display in their centres, promoting the survey.
 - Dedicated email address for responses and questions
 - Weekly FAQs document was published for staff
 - Attendance at CFA Learning, Social Care and Strategy & Commissioning Management Team meetings
 - Centre briefings with parents and families.
- 2.2 In total, we received 1,151 responses to the parents' consultation questionnaire and 95 written responses from staff and key stakeholders. Whilst there was a general appreciation among respondents for the exceptionally difficult financial challenges facing the Council over the coming years and for the need to re-evaluate and re-shape services in response to these challenges, it was evident from the feedback that we received that the services and the support Children's Centres provide are really valued by families and local communities and that staff are understandably proud of what the Centres have achieved since they were first established. Fuller detail is provided in Appendix 1. Feedback will be used to inform the full response document and proposals for service change.

3. FINAL PROPOSALS

3.1 Following collation and careful review of all of the feedback submitted, it is recommended that the proposals outlined in the formal consultation are agreed with some changes to the following (full details are outlined within the confidential Appendix 2):

- **Management Capacity** - Manager posts are adjusted for the purposes of ensuring there is enough resource to manage the transition period. Where there is any additional Children's Centre Manager capacity, this would be used more widely as a county resource to support implementation, peer mentor, etc.
- **Cluster resourcing** - some small adjustments are made to the staffing levels for individual clusters based on feedback from the formal consultation
- **Play & Crèche Worker role** - is revised and broadened to encompass support to group delivery, working with parents to support play, early intervention, signposting, information, guidance and some work to support universal delivery in the community.
- **Arrangements for Mixed Model Clusters** - the Children's Centres Strategy & Support Team has been working closely with the Children's Centre clusters where there is a mix of Local Authority and nursery, primary school and voluntary sector providers throughout the consultation period. Given the mix of Children's Centre providers in Cambridgeshire, we are proposing some alternative arrangements where there are multiple providers. Centres in these clusters will work together to plan and deliver services whatever the provider arrangements, monitored by a partnership agreement and working to consistent Cambridgeshire performance requirements for all Centres.

4. BREAKDOWN OF 2014/15 SAVINGS

4.1 The table reflects the proportion of spend on staffing and non-staffing in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

4.2 In designing the new structure, it was decided to invest a greater proportion of the reduced budget in staffing in order to protect frontline delivery. Therefore a greater proportion of the reduction has been made through reducing non-staffing (for example administration, equipment and local commissioning) budgets.

CCC Managed Budget Breakdown	2014/15	2013/14
Non staffing %	6.88%	15.82%
Staffing %	93.12%	84.18%

*Figures exclude devolved funding savings from Schools and External Centres

5. PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

5.1 It is proposed that following the approval of Cabinet's budget adjustments at Full Council on 18th February 2014, the £200k re-investment funding is allocated as follows:

- The reconfiguration of Children's Centres will result in a shift in resources becoming more targeted, where 70% of the resource is focussed on need and deprivation. This inevitably has a greater impact in more rural areas where need is less concentrated. Reinvestment of £120k will enable funds to be allocated into Children's Centres serving some relatively more affluent and rural areas where pockets of need are harder to identify; to, increase capacity ensuring the targeted offer is not diluted for those families. This additional resource would be allocated directly to those Centres, based on an agreed formula for distribution.
- Re-investment of £80k to further develop a volunteer workforce across Children's Centres' services and buildings to facilitate the continuation and extension of some provision.

6. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

6.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 6.1.1 Children's Centres have a responsibility to offer support, guidance and practical help to parents seeking to return to work. Working in partnership with other providers to deliver an integrated 0-5 early help offer will continue to be a fundamental role of Children's Centres in the reconfigured model.
- 6.1.2 Children's Centres will continue to work with Job Centre Plus to provide information about training, support with learning and skills development such as confidence building in readiness for work.

6.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 6.2.1 The Local Authority is required to make provision for Children's Centres; and this provision has been secured in statute through the Childcare Act 2006. The nationally prescribed core purpose of a Children's Centre is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers.
- 6.2.2 This core purpose is achieved by improving child and family health and life chances including improved parenting aspirations, skills and self esteem. In the new model, Children's Centres will be expected to maintain the established partnerships with other agencies, including GPs, Midwives, Health Visitors, Job Centre Plus and child care providers to deliver the core offer.
- 6.2.3 There are real opportunities as part of the reconfiguration to deliver an improved integrated early help offer 0-5 if we continue to embed and develop our partnership working arrangements. This will be progressed through the Healthy Child Programme Board.

6.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

6.3.1 Children's Centres carry a responsibility for a dual brief – to work both universally and to target resources to need, investing in the earliest years of a child's life. Working in partnership with other providers, Children's Centres will be expected to continue to make provision for both universal and targeted services as part of a wider integrated early help offer to families with children aged 0-5 in Cambridgeshire in line with the authorities statutory duties. The universal and targeted services provided will be defined locally by each Children's Centre cluster based on the variations in need across Cambridgeshire.

6.3.2 In response to the significant budget reductions, targeted services will need to be prioritised and service delivery will have to be more targeted to support those most in need including:

- Children under 5, and their parents/carers, with a Common Assessment Framework CAF
- Young parents
- Children on Early Support and their parents
- Children under 5, with SEN and their parents/carers
- Parents and carers of children accessing funded childcare places for 2 year olds
- Children under 5, and their parents/carers, known to Social Care including those subject to a child in need or child protection plan, and children who are Looked After

6.4 Ways of working

6.4.1 Cambridgeshire's 40 individual Children's Centres will be grouped to create 12 clusters. Each cluster will be made up of between two to five Children's Centres. The new configuration of Children's Centres will require new ways of working:

6.4.2 Working with local community groups and agencies to enable them to deliver activities through Children's Centres that will contribute to children's development and well-being

Services for families in Cambridgeshire will be provided in a way which delivers most impact for families, including the development of community capacity. We will explore opportunities to develop the way services in Children's Centres can be supported by volunteers e.g. facilitating self-sustaining universal community groups through volunteering and in doing so, offer high quality personal and professional development opportunities.

6.4.3 Reducing the opening times of some Centres

Each cluster of Children's Centres will be required to continue to be open and offer services for 48 weeks a year, but in future this would vary according to need in the area around each Children's Centre building; levels of need will determine resources available for service delivery.

Opening times for Children's Centre buildings will be arranged locally by Children's Centre Managers working with Locality Managers and other providers. Where there is higher need in each cluster, it is expected that

there should be a greater physical presence, and longer opening hours. Where need is lower, there will continue to be access to Children's Centre buildings but it will be reduced, and it is expected that services will typically be delivered flexibly including through outreach, both in group settings with partners, and 1:1 support to families.

6.4.4 Employing more flexible staff and resource arrangements across the network of Children's Centres

Clusters will be managed by a single manager responsible for service planning and delivery across all of the Children's Centres in each cluster. In Clusters with mixed providers there will be a joint Advisory Board.

There will be a single workforce responsible for working flexibly across two to five Children's Centres. Staffing levels across the cluster vary to reflect need and the geography of the cluster.

The business support staff structure has been remodelled to align with the business support staff in the wider Localities and Partnerships teams.

7. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resource and Performance Implications

7.1.1 As now, the Children's Centre Improvement Advisors (CCIAs) will continue to have responsibility for the quality elements of Children's Centres, including the development of a Self Evaluation Form, planning for improvement, working to implement Ofsted guidance and helping Centres to prepare for Ofsted and achieve a good or better outcome.

7.1.2 Children's Centres performance will be monitored and reported internally, using agreed performance measures as well as through the external measures of the Ofsted inspection framework. Performance measures will be focussed on measuring the impact of services for users. Children's Centres will be expected to continue to use the management information system One for the recording of Children's Centre registrations, attendance at activities, 1:1 case work and various other types of involvement with families.

7.1.3 The development and establishment of Children's Centres has enabled large-scale investment in staff expertise and skills. The impact of the savings will mean a net loss of expertise for the organisation in line with staffing reductions. As always, we will seek to mitigate the number of compulsory redundancies in line with HR practice.

7.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

7.2.1 The new configuration will result in the need to change to the Department for Education (DfE) defined delivery model status of Cambridgeshire's Children's Centres from 'stand alone' to a 'group' or 'collaboration' which are defined as:

7.2.2 Group - this is a group of individual Children's Centres that share leadership and management and have integrated services across the centres in the group. A children's centre Group has one inspection and one report that contains judgements for the Group as a whole. The report does not contain

judgements about the individual Centres that make up the Group. A Children's Centre Group:

- shares leadership and management (for example a Group manager or leader or a shared management committee or other shared governance arrangements)
- through a formal agreement, offers integrated or shared services and activities across the centres making up the Group
- must operate in a defined geographical area within one LA and be easily accessible to local families with young children

7.2.3 Collaboration: where a number of Children's Centres do not share leadership and management but do share their services through formal or informal arrangements in order to allow families' access to a wider range of services than an individual centre can provide. Wherever possible the inspections of centres sharing this type of arrangement will be arranged to take place simultaneously allowing for the sharing of some evidence and inspector resource. Each Children's Centre in a Collaboration will have its own inspection report.

7.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

7.3.1 The proposals may have a negative impact on the following community groups due to reduced opening times and reductions in some existing delivery:

7.3.2 Disability

Children and/or parents with disabilities and special needs would continue to be a target user group for Children's Centres. Access would be unlikely to change for disabled children and parents, as specialist services would continue to be offered from existing Children's Centre Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEN/D) hubs.

7.3.3 Pregnancy and maternity

The services provided by Children's Centres have always been targeted at supporting pregnant women and parents of children under 6 months old, who will continue to be a target user group for Children's Centres in the future. Needs identified by midwives and Health Visitors antenatally will mean families will be able to access early help and support from Children's Centres; in particular very young parents, women suffering from post-natal depression and parents seeking support with their parenting.

7.3.4 Rural isolation

Those living in rural areas with less well established transport links may find it harder to access services as a result of changes. Rural clusters will be in receipt of reinvestment funds which will be used to increase outreach.

7.3.5 Gender

Those accessing Children's Centre services are predominantly women and the plans may therefore have a differential impact on women.

We have sought to mitigate these impacts so far as is possible in the face of exceptionally difficult financial challenges

7.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- 7.4.1 We have consulted extensively with staff, families, County Council Members, Unions and key stakeholders in line with the DfE Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance (April 2013) which states that local authorities should consult with everyone affected by proposals to change the range and nature of Children Centre provision.
- 7.4.2 Whilst ensuring that the service specification is delivered, activities will continue to be arranged locally informed by the need of local communities and the expectation will be that Children's Centre Managers consult with their users to develop a programme of activities.
- 7.4.3 Over the coming months, we will continue to keep staff, families, County Council Members, Unions and key stakeholders up to date throughout the implementation process. We also plan to consult and explore further with families charging for services in response to the parents' survey which suggested that respondents would rather pay for some services in Children's Centres rather than lose the existing range of services.

Response to the consultation (subject to Cabinet approval)	10 th March 2014
Recruitment and selection process	March – April 2014
Implementation begins	May 2014
Implementation complete	August 2014

7.5 Public Health Implications

- 7.5.1 Children's Centres will continue to provide community-based access to health-related information and resources including:
- A standard and consistent offer, quality managed by the Families Information Service promoting key Public Health messages about life style choices
 - Encouraging and enabling families who find it hard to engage with services to access universal health services - e.g. routine appointments, immunisations
 - Delivery of Healthy Eating activities at Children's Centres, e.g. Winter Warmers project, supporting families to be able to provide economic and healthy meals. All Children's Centres operate a healthy eating policy and only serve healthy snacks and drinks
 - Delivery of activities to encourage physical activity for families
 - Targeted work with parents with mental health issues, parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - Key targeted projects in communities where there are higher levels of families with English As an Additional Language (EAL), some specifically related to health outcomes.
- 7.5.2 Children's Centres will continue to build on the integrated Healthy Child Programme offer established with Health Visitors and Midwifery services across Cambridgeshire leading to:
- Joint service delivery with Health Visitors
 - Midwives based at Children's Centres - ante natal booking taking place at CCs, parent craft classes

- 0-5 Locality Allocation and Referral Meeting (LARMs) held at Children's Centres - fortnightly/monthly, attended by all partners

7.5.3 These established working arrangements with health colleagues and Local Authority Public Health team will ensure that continuing to meet health priorities is central to the re-configuration of Children's Centres.

Source Documents	Location
None	