

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	12th February 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE
		E2593
TITLE:	Re- structuring of Early Years, Children Centre and Early Help (0-11) Services 2014-2016	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation</p> <p>Appendix 2: Design & Commissioning Principles</p> <p>Appendix 3: Impact analysis of proposed model, based on £1.834m budget reduction</p> <p>Appendix 4: Impact of retaining the full £2.335m savings from the Children’s Centre and Early Years budget</p> <p>Appendix 5: Current and proposed Children’s Centre Services, opening hours and posts</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The restructuring of the Children’s Centre and Early Years services is a result of the budget reduction agreed by Council in February 2013. Proposals for models of delivering the service within a new budget have been developed over the last 12 months with the assistance of the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDS Panel). This report is the culmination of the work to date and sets out the emerging models and proposals for the delivery of the services to be implemented from April 2015. The next stage is to consult on these proposals.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Include within its budget proposals to Council, the proposed adjustment which permanently deletes the £500,000 savings originally required from the Early Years and Children's Centres base budget in 2014/15 and subsequent years.
- 2.2 Note and accept the emerging models and proposals for each of the five service areas.
- 2.3 Instruct officers to formally consult on the proposals for these services.
- 2.4 Instruct officers to bring back to Cabinet fully developed models and proposals for the future delivery of each service.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The Council's financial planning to address the on-going reductions to local authority spending resulted in the development of the Medium Term Service Resource Plan (MTSRP) 2013-2016. The Early Years and Children's Centre Services area was identified as a service area where either efficiencies or budget reductions could be made. Originally the proposed savings were profiled as below:

2013 – 14	£ 273,000
2014 – 15	£ 228,000
2015 – 16	£1,834,000
Total	£2,335,000

- 3.2 The Council agreed the MTSRP 2013 – 2016 at its meeting on 16th February 2013, with an amendment which deferred the implementation of budget reductions in Early Years and Children's Centre Services until 2014 – 15. The revised savings profile is set out below:

2013 – 14	£0
2014 – 15	£501,000
2015 – 16	£1,834,000
Total	£2,335,000

- 3.3 The Council, whilst agreeing the MTSRP, also agreed that the Early Years and Children's Centre savings were still subject to more detailed proposals and would require a Budget vote in future years. A request was made to the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDS Panel) to assess the options and implications of making the reductions and make recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and implementation.

- 3.4 The council debated a petition on this topic at its meeting on 17th January 2014 and resolved, subject to Council approval of the 2014-15 budget in February, that the additional £500K proposed by the Cabinet become an on-going part of base budget. In the event of the hub and spoke model being implemented, the majority of this additional funding be directed at supporting and protecting as much as possible the services available in the 'non hub' centre areas, and a particular to vulnerable families recognising that final allocation are determined using a needs-led formula. The proposals in section 5 of this report are therefore made on the basis of a £1.834m reduction rather than the original £2.335 m reduction. The saving would now be profiled as follows:

2015 – 16 £1,835,000

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The relevant legislation about Children's Centres and Early Years is listed at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Consideration has been given through all the preparatory work to issues relating to need, poverty, disability and disadvantages of children and families. Service reductions have been designed to ensure those children and families most in need of help continue to receive "early help" services.
- 4.3 A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be developed to ensure groups affected by the proposed changes are taken into consideration and the impacts minimised. This EIA will be informed by the proposed consultation and will be included in the subsequent report to Cabinet.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1.1 A Task and Finish group was established as part of the PDS review outlined above and three options were developed, all of which were based on a 'hub and spoke' model of delivery. Officers, along with members of the Task and Finish Group undertook informal consultation with the 5 Children's Centre Boards; the Voluntary Sector Play and Specialist Family Support Services and the 0-11 Multi-Agency Group that reports to the Children's Trust Board. This consultation gave the group a clear understanding of the role the services play in children's and families' lives, and helped inform the development of the emerging models.
- 5.1.2 Following this work, PDS Panel agreed the following recommendations to go to Cabinet.
- i. That the design and commissioning principles (see Appendix 2) are adopted and applied to any future models of service delivery
 - ii. That the approach to Play, Specialist Family Support and the Early Years Foundations Stage are dealt with separately from Children's Centres.
 - iii. That any funding reductions for these services are considered separately in line with service models.

- iv. To recommend a hub and spoke model as the basis for delivery of Children's Centre Services, whilst recognising that the number of hubs, and the level of service at the non-hub Children's Centres, will be dependent upon the scale of budget reductions ultimately agreed by Council in February 2014.
- v. To retain all existing Children's Centre buildings.
- vi. To further explore the potential of a commissioned model and/or an integrated model with health services, acknowledging the need for further market testing of the potential providers.
- vii. To fully undertake a cost benefit analysis of any service changes.
- viii. To propose that Cabinet reconsiders the overall Council budget to determine if alternative areas of saving can be identified. The reasons being:
 - a) Information gained by the Task & Finish Group shows that early support to vulnerable people can lead to savings overall. There is concern that such significant cuts could lead to more costly interventions by statutory services of the council at a later stage.
 - b) A commitment by the Panel to recommend some changes to services to meet part of the potential savings if the Cabinet are prepared to do likewise.

5.1.3 The first 7 recommendations made by the PDS panel were agreed. The proposal to reconsider the overall Council budget and alternative strategies to alleviate part of the planned reduction was agreed but as part of the wider Council budget setting process. Cabinet also agreed a consultation and decision timeline and a request that the PDS Panel receive a presentation from Officers on the developing model at its meeting in January 2014.

5.1.4 The PDS panel received a presentation on the emerging models and proposals for each service area at its meeting on 27th January 2014, and sought clarification on a number of issues.

5.1.5 The services affected by the budget reductions support families with children aged 0-11 as follows:

- Children's Centres (0-4)
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Service (0-4)
- Community Play and Specialist Family Support service (5-13)
- Parent Support Advisors (5-11)
- Commissioned health related service (0-4)

5.1.6 These services provide early intervention and support to families in order to prevent problems and needs escalating, and are part of the Council's Early Help offer.

EMERGING MODELS

6.0 CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES

6.1 The Children's Centre services are specifically aimed at families with children aged 0-4. Their purpose is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness. A key role of Children's Centres therefore is to support parents to develop their parenting skills and parenting aspirations. They also have a strong focus on integrated working with partners, particularly Health to improve child and family health and life chances.

6.2 Currently there are 11 Children's Centres dispersed across B&NES, 9 delivered by the council and 2 by a voluntary sector provider, First Steps. These are managed as 4 groups as follows:

- Bath East (Parkside, Weston and St Martins Garden Children Centres)
- Bath West (Twerton and Moorlands Children's Centres)
- Keynsham and Chew Valley Children's Centres
- Somer Valley (Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Paulton and Peasedown St John)

6.3 The emerging model for Children's Centres is as follows:

- To remodel the current four groups into two new groups by centralising and consolidating management support and back office functions, but retain 11 Children's Centres and other community venues for service delivery.
- To group the Children's Centres according to geographical location as follows:

Bath (5 centres)	Parkside (service centre)
	Twerton (service centre)
	Weston
	St Martins Garden
	Moorlands
North East Somerset (6 centres)	Radstock (service centre)
	Midsomer Norton
	Peasedown St John
	Paulton
	Keynsham (service centre)
	Chew Valley

- Commission the management and the running of the buildings separately to the commissioning of the Children's Centre services. This will provide one way of involving other organisations in taking on a greater role in the provision of Children Centre Service, and will allow the two new Children's Centre services to focus on their core role.
- To establish two service centres for each group, housed in two Children's Centres in each area. For Bath it's proposed that this is Parkside and Twerton and for North East Somerset, it is proposed this is Radstock and Keynsham. These will act as the main bases for Children Centre staff, as well as the Health Visitors based in the catchment area. The rationale for using these buildings is their locations, capacity to accommodate staff, deliver the groups and the fact they are four of the busiest centres. Health Visitors and other partners can still be accommodated in the other Children's Centres as they are currently. The model described is still in essence a hub and spoke model.

- 6.4 It is proposed to commission the two new services to deliver outreach services (home visits and groups), and maintain these at current service levels. The main change is that the service will only be commissioned for families and children with additional needs. No open access or universal groups will be commissioned or funded through this budget from April 2015 onwards. However, they could be delivered voluntarily through other funding sources or by volunteers.
- 6.5 It is proposed to commission a volunteer /peer support programme, Early Years Teacher support and a Link social worker to maintain current service levels within the new Children's Centre Services .The only change is to commission the social worker support from Children's Social Care, rather than commission it as part of the two new Children's Centre services. This model would better support links with social care and "step up and step down" arrangements where families are referred to social care or are referred from social care.
- 6.6 It is proposed that the four Children's Centres housing the service centres are open full time as they are now. The opening times of the other Children's Centres will match the times when the groups and courses are running as a minimum, as this is when families and children access the Children's Centres both to attend the groups, and seek information and advice from staff. The delivery of the groups and courses will remain at the same level as currently provided, however, the frequency of the groups and when they are run varies. Some are weekly, others bi weekly and some are courses which run periodically throughout the year, so it is difficult to be precise about which days and times each of the other Children's Centre will be open. The commitment is to match current levels of targeted work in each centre even if the time/days operated change. In addition there are several groups which are run in community venues to facilitate access in more rural areas with pockets of deprivation, and these too will continue to be provided. It is also too early at this stage to know what additional support could be provided by the building and facilities management function, particularly if it successfully

attracts other services and community groups to use the Children's Centres where there is capacity. With these caveats, the indicative pattern of opening times compared to the current arrangements is shown in Appendix 5, along with current and proposed Children's Centre Services and posts.

- 6.7 In summary the key changes are: (i) back office and management support will be consolidated from four service groups into two; (ii) not all the Children's Centres will be open full time; (iii) universal services will not be commissioned for children and families without additional need and (iv) the management of buildings and facilities will be commissioned separately to the services. An analysis of the changes and impacts is in appendix 3.
- 6.8 The budget reduction and changes required in B&NES, whilst substantial, are on a par with many of the reductions and changes taking places in other parts of the country. Many local authorities have already (or are proposing) to remodel their services and reduce their budgets, published proposals across the country include:
- Portsmouth £1 million from children centres
 - Kent proposing to close 28 out of 97 centres
 - Warwickshire proposed £2.3 million cuts to children's centres
 - Sheffield proposing to reorganise 36 early years centres into 17 children's centre 'areas' in order to save £3.5 million
 - Possible changes to Swindon's 14 children's centres and cuts of £390,000 from the budget
 - South Gloucestershire have already re-structured into Hub and Spoke models and reduced their budgets.

Many local authorities are, or have remodelled their services in a similar way to the approach taken in B&NES.

7.0 EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE SERVICE

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Service is delivered by the local authority. It has a statutory function to ensure sufficient quality preschool places (including childminders), to narrow the gap for children by the end of reception and also to moderate assessments against Early Years Foundation profile. In addition to quality improvement, the service also has a strong inclusion role to ensure children with additional needs and disabilities are able to access quality preschool provision, with additional support where required. The service currently supports 348 different preschool (including childminders) settings provided by a variety of organisations. Collectively these settings have over 900 staff.
- 7.2 The emerging model for the Early Years Foundation Stage service is as follows:
- To develop a business model to charge for non-statutory support and training to preschools to cover the costs

- It is proposed that the service reduces and only targets preschools (including childminders) where they need to improve for instance following a poor Ofsted inspection, where there are welfare concerns or significant numbers of eligible 2 year olds.
- It is proposed to resource the moderation function and support for children with additional needs at the same level. This will ensure the local authority is well placed to support the implementation of the SEND reforms.

7.3 The impact of these proposals is shown in appendix 3.

8.1 COMMUNITY PLAY AND SPECIALIST FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

8.1 Two Community Play contracts are currently commissioned from two voluntary sector organisations. One service covers Bath and the other NE Somerset. Each service currently provides after school Community Play sessions, Play days during the holidays, support to communities to develop and run play provision and 1-1 family play inclusion work with children with additional needs.

8.2 Notice of these reductions has been given to the play providers and the organisations are in the process of remodelling their services. The services will be completely funded through Direct Schools Grant from April 2014. The Community Play sessions will reduce and be targeted to children with additional needs and supporting those who come through the family inclusion work. The contracts expire during 2015 and it's proposed to tender for one contract to cover the whole of B&NES.

8.3 A specialist family support service is currently commissioned from a voluntary sector provider to support families with complex needs. These are predominantly families experiencing domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health problems. The service provides intensive outreach support and therapeutic and counselling services and supports around 280 families a year. They also deliver a 'community parents' scheme to offer practical support to other families.

8.4 The specialist family support contract expires during 2015 and the proposal is to tender for a new service at a reduced contract value. A review will be undertaken as part of this process to ensure effective alignment with the Connecting Families service as well as the other Children's Centre and Early Years services to ensure a co-ordinated offer of support to families. A review is required given that the Connecting Families service had not been established at the time of the first contract for Specialist family Support.

9.0 PARENT SUPPORT ADVISORS

9.1 The current service is provided by the local authority and delivered by a team of Parent Support Advisors. Support is provided to parents, children and schools where a child is having difficulties at school. They run parenting programmes and help parents support their children and develop the

confidence to engage well with their child's school to resolve any issues affecting their child's learning.

- 9.2 It is proposed to develop a business model for this service and charge schools and Behaviour and Attendance Panels for the parent advisor service in order to cover costs. This approach builds on the current practice; however there is a risk that this service will reduce significantly if sufficient income cannot be generated.

10.0 COMMISSIONED HEALTH RELATED SERVICES

- 10.1 The Early Years Service currently commissions a Speech and Language service to support preschool settings and a breast feeding support service. It also makes a contribution to the wider Primary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. It is proposed to reduce these budgets and reshape these services through the commissioning process as and when the contracts expire.

11.0 RATIONALE

- 11.1 The amendment to the level of budget saving required will make a significant difference to the Council's ability to meet its statutory duties and deliver a service in accordance with the agreed design principles (Appendix 2). The potential additional impact of the full £2.335m saving target is illustrated at Appendix 4.
- 11.2 The emerging model is based on the findings of the PDS Task and Finish Group; models being developed in other local authority areas; the service design and commissioning principles proposed by PDS and agreed in Cabinet in November 2013; and are considered to be the most appropriate model to enable delivery of effective early help and support for children and families within the available resources.
- 11.3 Consultation is a duty of local authorities when making significant change to Children's Centre Provision in their area (see Appendix 1) and can help to ensure we are clear about the impact of the proposed changes as well as gaining further valuable insights from parents and other stakeholders about the aspects of the services that are most important to them. It will also help to raise public awareness of the proposed model and the rationale for proposing it.
- 11.4 It will be important for the Cabinet to properly consider the results of consultation and the completed EIA and any suggested amendments to the proposed model as a consequence of those, before it approves the final model for delivery of the services.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 12.1 The process of initial informal consultation and consideration by PDS and Cabinet as well as full Council debate has helped to shape the emerging proposals as they have been developed – particularly through the agreed design principles and PDS recommendations to Cabinet.

12.2 In particular this has suggested it would not be acceptable to propose the closure of any of the 11 Children’s Centres; and that the model should ensure the focus of resources is on front facing service delivery with efficiencies in back office functions.

13.0 CONSULTATION

13.1 Informal consultation took place during September. The Task & Finish Group visited the Children’s Centre Boards and consulted with 2 voluntary sector Play providers; 1 voluntary sector Family Support services and 1 strategic multi-agency group representing services 0-11 years. Parents/users were present in most of these meetings. 80 parents were consulted individually over August and September for their views, including the benefits of the services.

13.2 The statutory guidance for Children’s Centres states that before making a significant change to services, the Council must formally consult everyone who could be affected by the proposed changes, for example, local families, those who use the centres, children’s centres staff, advisory board members and service providers. Particular attention should be given to ensuring disadvantaged families and minority groups participate in the consultation.

14.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council’s decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet 4th December 2013 2. Cabinet 13th November 2013: Restructuring of the Early Years, Children’s Centre and Early Help (0-11 years) Services 2014-2016. 3. Early Years, Children & Youth Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel: Re-structuring of the Early Years, Children’s Centre and Early Help (0-11 years) Services 2014-2016. 4. Council briefing for meeting on 17th January 2014
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