

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children and Young People Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	17th May 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE
TITLE:	Update on Family Support Services	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Comparison of families accessing Children's Centre targeted and universal services pre and post June 2015 Appendix 2: Comparison of targeted services pre and post remodelling		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 In September 2014, Cabinet agreed the proposal to remodel the Children Centre Services and other early years and family support services to deliver cost savings of £1.535m agreed by the Council at its meeting in February 2014. It agreed that the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDS Panel) should receive a report and review implementation of the new model a year following implementation.

1.2 This report provides an update, and reviews the impact of the changes made to Children's Centre Services and of the recommissioning of the Specialist Family Support and the Community Play services.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Note and comment on the updates provided in this paper.

2.2 To receive an update on the new Family Support and Play Service one year on.

2.3 To receive a paper on the evolving performance framework for Early Help Services in due course.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The budget savings have been largely achieved, although there is a short term pressure in the commissioning budget, principally because of the delay caused by the need to retender the Family Support and Play service.
- 3.2 First Steps achieved the savings by restructuring roles and not replacing staff that had left. The Council achieved the savings through a small number of voluntary redundancies, ending fixed term contracts as expected and restricting roles.
- 3.3 None of the Children's Centre buildings has shut as a result of the budget reduction. However, the services are experiencing some cost pressures, associated with running the buildings and making them available to other commissioned services to use either as office bases or to deliver services. Children's Centre services have been working towards charging building users at full cost but are unable to fully recover the costs immediately because historically, cost of premises have not been explicitly included within some commissioned service budgets.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The remodelled Children's Centre Service continues to deliver services which meet the requirements of the relevant statutory guidance, particularly the Sure Start Children's Centre Statutory Guidance 2013 and the Ofsted Framework for Children's Centres Inspections. The current Ofsted framework is under review and we are expecting the new framework to be issued for consultation in the autumn of 2016.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 CHILDRENS CENTRE SERVICES

- 5.2 Proposals for remodelling Children's Centre Services and reviewing and commissioning Family Support and Community Play Services were agreed by Cabinet in September 2014. Cabinet also considered a request from Children's Centre managers under the Right to Provide and agreed to permit the development of a business case for a staff mutual.
- 5.3 It was agreed that the Children's Centre services would be remodelled and only funded to:
- (1) Provide targeted support to families with additional needs
 - (2) Only open non main Children Centre buildings when groups or activities are being delivered.
 - (3) Move to two Children's Centre service groupings; one covering Bath with main service centres in Twerton and Parkside Children's Centres, and the other in North East Somerset with the main services centres in Radstock and Keynsham Children's Centres.
- 5.4 Transitional funding was made available to allow for a phased implementation. The Children Centre Services implemented all proposed changes from 1st June 2015, with the exception of moving to two service groupings. Cabinet agreed that

this be deferred pending the outcome of the business case for developing the staff mutual.

- 5.5 A Staff Mutual Project Group was established to oversee the process. A feasibility and cost /benefit analysis was undertaken and it became clear that that preparatory work around trading was achieving most of what the service wanted to achieve through the development of a staff mutual. Any further benefit of developing a mutual was outweighed by associated risks. A decision based on recommendations from the Project Board was made by the Strategic Director in consultation with the Cabinet member for Children's Services in November 2015 to cease development of the staff mutual, and not move to a two Children's Centre service grouping.
- 5.6 A commissioning approach is taken to the provision of both Children's Centre Services. This includes the council run service and the First Steps service in Bath West. Since implementation, the two services have worked together to develop a more consistent and co-ordinated offer of targeted support across Bath and North East Somerset: This includes:
- (1) Delivering attachment based programmes either through groups or one to one support in the home. These focus on parent-child relationships and enhancing children's development.
 - (2) Earlier identification of children with developmental delay and emerging special educational needs through the delivery of Early Support Groups and Step by Step programmes.
 - (3) Parenting support provided through home based outreach and the delivery of the Incredible Years Parenting Group Courses.
 - (4) A stronger emphasis is being put on helping parents back into employment through the delivery of courses run in partnership with City of Bath College and Clean Slate. These are run alongside good quality children's groups delivered by the service to support child development and learning.
 - (5) The delivery of a volunteer programme to create volunteer opportunities for parents/carers and supporting them into employment.
- 5.7 During the consultation process a number of concerns were raised about the effect of the changes. This included the loss of universal / open access groups run by Children Centre Services, the stigma associated with only providing targeted support to those most in need and confusion about who would be eligible. The services reported that initially stigma did appear to affect take up in some areas, but closer working with early years setting and health visitors, sensitively managed referral processes and clear communications have addressed this as suggested by a significant increase in referrals.
- 5.8 The continued delivery of some universal groups by the council and other voluntary agencies in many children centre buildings, and delivery of Health Visitor led universal Baby Feeding Hubs in children's centres and linked community venues has also helped addressed many of the concerns raised

during the consultation about stigma and about the loss of universal provision. In addition there also good information available both through children's centre service and family information about other groups that families can access.

- 5.9 The Council run universal groups are still in the early phase of development and seeing just under half of those seen in universal groups prior to remodelling. There is a charge to attend these groups, and whilst many families do attend and can pay, some report that they cannot afford to.
- 5.10 Despite the budget reductions the services have been able to manage the multi-use of buildings through their administrative functions. However, their ability to recover a contribution to meeting the cost of doing this by charging commissioned services to recover the full costs has been limited as described in 3.3 above.
- 5.11 The concerns expressed during the consultation about increasing travelling costs for families as a result of many centres only being open part time has been addressed by the continued delivery of targeted outreach in a wide range of community venues supported by the use of the mini bus across the more rural areas of North East Somerset.
- 5.12 A set of Design and Commissioning Principles which were developed in conjunction with the CYP Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel to inform the remodelling process have been adhered to in full.
- 5.13 The number of families accessing Children's Centre targeted and universal services pre and post remodelling is shown in Appendix 1 and targeted support groups is shown in Appendix 2. Whilst there has been an overall drop in the number of families accessing Children's Centre services, the numbers in receipt of targeted support has been sustained which was the aim of the remodelling. The services report that close working with partners means the effective targeting of those most in need has improved. There were concerns during the consultation that quality would fall. Although it is still relatively early days, there is no evidence to suggest this is the case, either through Ofsted inspections or commissioner site visits to assess the quality of safeguarding and other key areas of service delivery. The continued positive take up of traded services, such as Baby Massage classes, as well as evidence that referrals for targeted work remain steady, are both evidence that quality of provision remains of good standard.
- 5.14 There has, as expected, been an overall drop in the number of families accessing council delivered universal groups, however all families with young children have access to the universal Health Visitor service. Full responsibility for commissioning the Health Visitor service transferred from NHS England to Public Health in the Council in October 2015. The service has now aligned with the council boundaries rather than GP registration boundaries and now has the full complement of Health Visitors. Commissioners of the Children's Centres and Health Visitors services are working collaboratively to support the two services to align and work more closely in terms of delivering health and social care to support families with young children.

5.15 The Health Visitor service provides the main universal offer to all families with young children up to the age of 5 and families in B&NES can expect 6 key visits under the universal offer from a Health Visitor, as follows:

- (1) Antenatal
- (2) New birth visit
- (3) 6-8 weeks
- (4) 3-4 months
- (5) 9-12 months
- (6) 2 - 2 and half years

Health Visitors are ideally placed and qualified to identify any families and children with additional health and social needs and put them in touch with the Children's Centre Service, along with other services for additional support. Their current case load is 8214 children aged 0-4. Health Visitors are now located in all four Children's Centre main service areas as well as in Chew Valley and St Martin's Gardens. This co-location and consistent universal offer by Health Visiting such as the Integrated Review of children aged 2, is supporting more integration between Early Years settings, Children's Centres and Health Visitors. This is starting to result in more children with additional needs being identified earlier, with referrals for targeted support continuing to increase. Health Visitors also run universal Baby Feeding Hubs in all Children Centre areas – either in the centres themselves or in linked community venues. The number of infants attending these have increase significantly over the last year.

5.16 Joint working at all levels between the Health Visitor and Children's Centre services is becoming embedded across the services. There are weekly meetings between the Health Visitor Lead and Children's Centre Service Manager and joint management of Early Childhood Allocation Panels. Health Visitors are involved in the development of the Children's Centre Area Business Plan and there has recently been a joint review of the referral and communication processes between the two services.

5.17 The council Children's Centre service has continued to deliver a universal offer through its transacted services team. The team reports good take up in most of the universal groups offered. Open groups are being run in Weston, Parkside, St Martins Gardens, Chew Valley, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock Children Centre Areas. Plans are underway to further develop this provision with wider partners including the Parks Department, to deliver joined up holiday provision in the summer holidays.

5.18 B&NES and First Steps Children's Centre Services are working together to deliver a consistent and co-ordinated targeted support offer across Bath and North East Somerset. A recent partnership working agreement has been developed between the council and First Steps to enable the sharing of resources across both services.

5.19 Despite the very good work undertaken by the Children's Centre Services to join up and improve outcomes for children and their families, there remain a number of key challenges. The costs associated with continuing to run all the 11 Children Centre buildings has been covered in 3.3. Data sharing to identify those most in need and track the progress of children and families has improved in some areas, but continues to be a challenge across other Early Years settings and the

Health Visitors service. The development of 'Early Years Hubs' with Early Years Settings and the Integrated 2-year Review (Early Years Settings and Health Visitors) is expected to further improve the sharing of information which remains a priority area to address for both Children's Centre Service managers and commissioners.

6 SPECIALIST FAMILY SUPPORT AND PLAY CONTRACTS

- 6.1 A service review was undertaken with key stakeholders as part of the commissioning process and the services redesigned in light of the establishment of Connecting Families, other service remodelling and budget reductions. The 3 existing contracts are being replaced with one Family Support and Play service (FSPS). This brings together the play interventions and therapeutic approaches currently provided to children, parents and families to deliver a whole family approach and contribute to the Connecting Families Programme (Troubled Families). The new service will be closely aligned to the Children's Centre and Connecting Families Service to form a more clearly defined and co-ordinated targeted support service offer in Bath and North East Somerset. These will sit in between universal services and children's statutory social and health care services.
- 6.2 A briefing on the new service was made available to panel members last September
- 6.3 A competitive tender exercise was run during September and October 2015, but we were unable to make a contract award. During the latter stages of the evaluation process it was discovered that the Council had not obtained the necessary assurance around information governance and IT for all bidders and as such the tender process was restarted. This was necessary to ensure the security of data regarding individuals who may access the service as well as ensuring a fair and transparent process for all bidders.
- 6.4 Subsequently, officers from Information Governance and IT have clarified expectations from bidders in these areas, and ran two briefing sessions for all Council contracted providers in March this year. The tender for the new service has now recommenced and the new contract will be in place from the 1st November 2016.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Service managers and other commissioners have been consulted in preparation of this paper.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 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	Cabinet Report September 2014: Restructuring of Early Years, Children's Centres and Early help (0-11) services

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