
CHILDREN CENTRES

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Cyndi Hughes,**

**Responsible Director -
Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children & Adults Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To ask Cabinet to agree the proposals for consultation in respect of changes to the delivery of Children Centre services.

Summary

2. Within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016 it was agreed that Children Centre Delivery could possibly be delivered using alternative methods, and thus making a significant contribution to required financial savings. It is a legal requirement to consult with members of the public on any key changes in relation to Children's Centre buildings and delivery models.
3. The consultation will enable the views of the wider public, current and potential service users and stakeholders to inform a final proposal on the delivery model for Children's Centres.
4. The proposal is to deliver a wide range of services on a Hub and Spoke Model with one dedicated Children's Centre and services operating out of satellite spokes throughout the Borough.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Cabinet approves the proposed Children Centre delivery model to move forward for consultation.
 - (b) Cabinet notes and approves the proposed consultation plans.
 - (c) That a further report is received by Cabinet at the conclusion of consultation

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) Changes to the delivery of Early Help services were agreed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in June 2016. This included the possibility of changing Children's Centre's delivery points.
 - (b) The proposed model for the Children's Centres needs to be informed by information gathered from consultation and a full understanding of equality impact assessments.

Suzanne Joyner
Director of Children and Adults Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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S17 Crime and Disorder	This report does not have any implications on Crime and Disorder within the borough.
Health and Well Being	The Council has identified that the health and wellbeing of the people in the borough is a key priority. There is a need to consider the impact that each decision made by the council will have on the health and wellbeing of the people within the borough.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	The Council has identified that there are specific statutory duties which we must comply with when making decisions, the most significant of these is the duty under the Equalities Act 2010. The Council has an equality scheme in place which should be followed as a means of ensuring that we comply with our statutory duty.
Wards Affected	The Council has identified that all wards will be affected and there are implication for all parents within the Darlington area.
Groups Affected	This report will affect children under the age of 5 and their parents and expectant mothers.
Budget and Policy Framework	The report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework at this stage.
Key Decision	There may be significant impacts depending on the nature of the changes finally agreed.
Urgent Decision	This report does not require an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not have any implication for changes to the Community Strategy. The council acknowledges that services will be delivered at a reduced level and from certain sites within the borough.
Efficiency	The council acknowledge that in order to meet the financial savings and efficiency of services, consultation on the new delivery model is required.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. Darlington Local Authority holds a portfolio of five Children's Centres. The centres follow the "Sure Start Children's Centre Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, Commissioners of local Health Services and Jobcentre plus, April 2013. This guidance links with the "Core Purpose" of Sure Start Children's Centres. The core purpose of children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers.
8. The Child Care Act 2006 states that any key change to children centre delivery must be subject to public consultation including; the closure of a Children Centres or reducing the services of children centres. The nature of the local authority proposals meet the definition under the Act and therefore requires consultation. In any event it is vital to the success of the services that continued engagement with users and other stakeholders informs decisions on the shape and form of services.

Children Centre Proposed Model

9. The proposal is to continue Children Centre delivery using a Hub and Spoke model. This could involve, McNay Street becoming a main delivery centre and satellite delivery points from Skerne Park, Dodmire and Mount Pleasant. Outreach centres from both Redhall Community Centre and Maidendale Community Centre would continue.
10. The model proposed could allow continuation of children centre delivery in key areas of the borough. All centres could continue to offer a range of 0-5 services which could be determined by area need. McNay Street would become a centre of delivery for all programmes and would be accessible for all residents within Darlington.
11. The model could offer a continued local service, although at a reduced level.
12. It is proposed that Haughton Children Centre be closed, however through the consultation process, should interested parties or potential change of use be identified then this will be considered.

Consultation Process

13. It is proposed that six week consultation period is undertaken. Consultation will take place with members of the public and stakeholders. There will be an on line questionnaire, social media campaign and public meetings at each children centres. Officers from the Council will hold public events and the advertising of these will be advertised via social media and a poster campaign.
14. The Children Centre Advisory Board and the Early Help Reference group will support the consultation process. These bring together schools, the Police, health services and voluntary groups to advise on the model of service delivery.

15. Post consultation the responses will be analysed and presented for next steps consideration and to make recommendations as required for the changes, including engagement with the Department of Education.
16. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will be refined and updated as part of the consultation. This will form a part of the final proposals.

Financial Implications

17. The MTFP agreed in July 2016 identified savings of £1.399M to be achieved across Children's Centres and the Early Help service. Progress has been made with regard to the Early Help model and this consultation is the next step in the process.

Legal Implications

18. Consideration of three children centres at Skerne Park, Mount Pleasant and Rydal will be required as they are subject to 125 year sub-leases agreed as part of the Academisation Programme.
19. Post consultation, the findings will be presented to Cabinet for next steps and agreement to approach the Department of Education to explore any potential impact of the proposals including release from funding conditions.