

## WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – September 2014

### Early Years and Children's Centre Review

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#### 1.0 Background

To update members of the Children's Trust on the outcome of the Early Years and Children's Centre Review.

#### 2.0 Review

A review of the Early Years and Children's Centre offer was directed by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services in April 2014. This was to respond to both required finance efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013) and changes to National Guidance (April 2013).

The Early Years' service which is responsible for the Children's Centres) has not been subject to a review since the inception of the children's centre offer 2002.

The review was progressed and managed as a consultative and inclusive approach, through a strategic multi-agency core group during April – August 2014. During this period four workshops were held to consider ways forward.

Service specific information was also considered and Local consultation activities with service users and partners took place to gather views to advise the review.

The report following the review was detailed in August 2014. It advises four recommendations that were detailed as findings from the review.

It is important to note that the extent of Early Years has a far wider sphere of activity than Children's Centres, much of which is legislative and is delivered as part of statutory duties levied at the Local Authority. This includes such as the Family Information Service, the 2, 3 and 4 year old early education offer and support for the wider early year's private, independent and voluntary sector.

#### 3.0 School readiness – A single Outcome

Key to the review and its future implementation has been both the endorsement of one overarching outcome for early childhood services '**school readiness**' in that children are ready to learn and ready for school at age 5 years.

The core group advised on an outcomes framework (attached). It is anticipated that all early childhood services will align through the outcomes framework that will advise planning, delivery and future commissioning requirements.

#### 4.0 Recommendations

1. The Children's Centre offer is developed to become an *integral part of the early help offer* through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help. An overarching aim is to safely reduce the number of children referred to social care or accessing specialist/statutory services and who are at risk of resulting poor outcomes.

2. Work to establish strategic and operational policies and procedures to ensure that a joint service offer across the Borough's early childhood services develop – reducing duplication, and cost and improving outcomes. This will include agreements for effective and robust information sharing.

This will include more formal partnership arrangements drawn up between the Council and health visiting and the Council and Jobcentre Plus (as statutory partners).

**3.** Staffing Structures developed as outreach teams for four constituency areas, designed around need and population. A Central Business Support Team will also be developed to secure the wider Early Years and Childcare remit and offer essential support to the operation of delivery and activity.

**4.** To secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated with DfE as full core purpose offer centres in each of the Constituency Localities [4]). This will give a named children's centre for every child and support the local authority to carry out its statutory function to evidence sufficient children's centre activity.

It is anticipated that all other current buildings will be preserved through partnership working with key stakeholders such as schools, health, and the voluntary, private and independent sector to offer an element of targeted support in those areas where there is a high local need identified. This will see the 18 Children's Centre buildings deliver as:

- 4 main hubs or designated children's centres
- 4 outreach or satellite of the main hubs
- 2 work as an extended nursery school to offer service delivery alongside the poverty hub schools
- 4 potentially transferred to be delivered by schools
- 4 to be further developed with schools and partners

## **5.0 Next Steps**

Public consultation to progress the recommendations which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service will be required and formal HR consultation will be applied for all staff affected by the resultant changes to the current position.

It is expected that the saving for 2015-16 will be achieved by:

- Implementing a staffing model delivered as outreach teams (based on need and demand) and an early year's business team.
- Retaining four designated Hub Children's Centres (the current position of sustaining 16 designated Children's Centres that all deliver the full core purpose offer is not viable)
- De-designated 12 children's centres – four of which will be retained as outreach provision of the Hub Children's Centres
- Supporting two of the 12 de-designated (Leasowe and Ganney's Meadow nursery schools) to offer extended services as part of the nursery school provision and alongside the poverty hub schools.
- Exploring the option for four of the de-designated children's centre buildings to be transferred to co-located school sites, to deliver the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer as part of the wider school offer.
- Explore with partners the potential to use the remaining four buildings differently as a wider partnership offer.

An early year's steering group is being developed and will oversee the implementation, developments and ongoing delivery.

It is anticipated that implementation will progress from April 2015.

**Report Author:**

Deborah Gornik

**Contact:**

0151 666 4330

**Appendices:**

Early Years and Children's Centre Review – August 2014

Outcomes framework