

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Cabinet

11 September 2014

SUBJECT:	Early Years and Children Centre Review
WARD/S AFFECTED: All	All Wards
REPORT OF:	Director of Children's Services
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Tony Smith
KEY DECISION?	Yes

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To endorse the Early Years Review (attached) undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014.
- 1.2 To note a key consideration of the review has been to ensure efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013) can be achieved for the 2014-2016 period.
- 1.3 To agree to the recommendations detailed in this report being progressed through to a public consultation.
- 1.4 To approve a six week consultation period being undertaken to progress the recommendations which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Sure Start Children's Centre offer in Wirral was developed (from 2002 - 2010) as part of a long term government strategy to deliver integrated early childhood services for children pre-birth to five and their families. This national programme was supported by significant grant funding (capital and revenue) and saw Wirral realise its target to develop and deliver 16 designated Children's Centres (by 2010).
- 2.2 Wirral to date continues to deliver 16 designated (by the government) Children's Centres, they operate through 18 buildings (original delivery was from 24 buildings - 6 buildings transferred to schools in 2013 and 1 mobile classroom was condemned and is no longer in use).
- 2.3 Each of the 16 designated Children's Centres deliver a full core purpose offer [including as a minimum health, education, employment advice and family information], across a ten hour day and all year round, as defined by government guidance and the Ofsted Framework.

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- 2.4 This position has been sustained despite changes to the statutory guidance (2013). Statutory guidance endorses a more flexible approach based on local need and circumstance.
- 2.5 This position has been sustained despite previous efficiency savings (2012 - 14). The previous position reduced management and back office functions and protected as far as possible front line delivery, this approach cannot sustain or support further efficiencies.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7.1 A review of the Early Years and Children's Centres offer (2014) was directed by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services in April 2014. This was to respond to required finance efficiencies (agreed December 2013) and changes to national guidance (April 2013).
- 2.8 The process was undertaken and managed through a core group of cross organisational representatives, during April – July 2014. The report following the review was detailed in August 2014 and was based on the findings from the review. The review has considered:
- The Councils financial position
 - The Councils corporate priorities
 - Partner requirements and collaboration
 - National policy and direction
 - The statutory responsibilities for the service
 - Requirements to deliver a targeted offer and alignment to the early help approach
- 2.8 The review has made explicit the necessity to achieve financial efficiencies of £2m agreed in December 2013, for the period 2014 -16. It has referenced the ongoing financial pressures that the Council continues to experience.
- 2.9 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 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 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Funding reductions not met in the time frame.
- 3.2 Likely disruption to families as they adjust to a service offer delivered differently.
- 3.3 Future cuts across Public Sector could impede desired future delivery and approach.

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- 3.4 Claw back of capital grant, if appropriate use of buildings by partners is not secured.
- 3.5 Incompatibility of data and systems, could present challenge to collaboration.
- 3.6 Not meeting regulatory requirements.
- 3.7 Partners and key agencies not delivering to the outcome framework or the recommendations and impacting negatively on the ambition to integrate and drive associated costs down and outcomes up.
- 3.8 Adverse media coverage and damage to the reputation of the Council and partners.
- 3.9 Not securing a resource to implement or communicate a different offer to service users.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A wide range of options have been considered through the review and noted in the report (attached).

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The review has been 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.
- 5.2 A further 20 consultation discussions to ensure service specific information was considered – this was on a one to one or small group basis and progressed as part of the review process during April – August 2014.
- 5.3 107 local consultation activities with service users and partners took place to gather views to advise the review. This approach was advised as an outcome of the first workshop (April 2014) and took place during May 2014.
- 5.4 Public consultation to progress the recommendations which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service will be required.
- 5.5 Formal HR consultation will be applied for all staff affected by the resultant changes to the current position.

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

- 6.1 There is work taking place to consider the future of five day nurseries that are still directly delivered (not achieving full cost recovery) by the Council. Funding to support a subsidy (approx £778,000) required by the day nurseries has already been removed (2104) from the budget.
- 6.2 This piece of work was approved by Cabinet on 7th July 2014 and is currently undergoing consultation with key partners and families. There are implications

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in respect of four of the children's centre buildings (subject to the review) and associated school partners, who have indicated a strong interest in working collaboratively regarding early education including taking on the direct responsibility for the 2 year old offer, but this position has yet to be confirmed.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 The options for consideration may have positive implications for voluntary, community and faith groups in that the review will look to strengthen and further develop partnership working with the sector, enabling and facilitating them to become more closely involved with the planning, decision making and delivery of services and further supporting access to buildings and resources.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 There is a requirement to reduce the current budget of £6m by £2m (2014-16). The current budget can be broken down as: Staffing £3.8m (this includes £1.1m already agreed (2013) to deliver family support as part of the wider targeted service offer and fixed pension costs of £0.5m). Supplies, services and premises costs £1.6m and recharges £0.6. This leaves a total of £2.3m for a new service delivery approach.

8.2 A saving of £500,000 in 2014 has already been achieved. This has been realised by vacancy control, streamlining commissioning arrangements and reducing spend against equipment and resources.

8.2 It is expected that the saving of £1.5m 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 collocated 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.

8.2 Proposals for the remaining budget of £2.3m see:

- A staffing resource of £1.15m - staffing structures will be developed as outreach teams in each of the constituency locality areas. This will secure early childhood services in each area and services will be based on levels

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of need. A Central Business Support Team will be developed to support the wider early year's services and meet the Local Authority's statutory duties.

- A building and premises resource of £600k to support 16 buildings - this will be focused on supporting the 4 main Centres and the correlating satellite/outreach buildings. It will also be used to provide an element of support for buildings being used as a partnership offer.
- A commission of £150k - will be allocated for each of the two extended nursery school (£300k) This will be in addition to the Delegated Schools Grant (DSG) under Single Formula funding arrangements. It will enable both schools to continue to provide an extended early years service offer and compliment the co-located Poverty Schools Hub work and the wider early years outreach offer.
- A commission of £200k - for use by the 4 children's centre advisory boards to secure supplies and services This will be used to resource and facilitate early childhood activity including outreach work, resources for parents attending targeted parenting groups, to meet costs of focussed family group and associated targeted work with families.
- A commission of £50k - for use by the business team to secure supplies and services this will support the delivery of statutory requirements including the Family Information Service publicity and awareness raising, training resources for new and existing childcare providers, room hire for training events, etc.

8.3 Work has been undertaken to detail a proposed staffing establishment to ensure a fit for purpose work force. The new staffing structure will be much less dependant on buildings to deliver children's centre activity and be developed as an outreach resource aligned to constituencies and linked to wider neighbourhood developments.

8.4 Work will continue to detail new job descriptions. Staff currently employed by the service will progress through formal consultation and be ring fenced for posts. Longer term they will be supported to undertake new roles.

8.5 Outreach delivery was established early in the Sure Start programme and continues to be noted and renowned nationally for its effectiveness in its delivery. This model of service delivery is already established within many public services such as Health visiting and social work. The future approach will therefore deliver services based on local need and use a broader range of buildings, this will include family homes, community buildings, church halls and schools, etc.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Sure Start Capital grant that was allocated to Local Authorities to support the building of Sure Start Children's Centres is subject to a 25 year claw back clause that has implications for the use and allocation of buildings and resources. The service delivery model has considered this. It is anticipated that by continuing to use the buildings through schools and partners delivering children's activity the Council will mitigate this risk.

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- 9.2 There is a statutory obligation placed on the local authority to ensure there are enough children's centre services to meet local need. The review and the proposed approach for future delivery, will ensure that the right type and level of early childhood services (delivered through the council and its partners), to meet need and targeted to those children and families in greatest need will still be delivered. This will include the universal health and education offer and a targeted approach.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014/eias-families-wellbeing>

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Not known – the proposal to use buildings differently and through partnership delivery is likely to see similar types of usage, however length and type of usage is not confirmed at this stage, which could impact on carbon reductions and environment. .

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None identified at this time.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 13.1 That cabinet endorse the Early Years Review (attached) undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014.
- 13.2 That cabinet note that a key consideration of the review has been to ensure efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013), can be achieved for the 2014-15 period. The review has noted and acknowledged that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.
- 13.3 That cabinet agree to the recommendations detailed in the review report (attached) being progressed through to a public consultation.
- 13.4 That cabinet agree to a six week consultation period being undertaken to progress the recommendations detailed in the review report (attached), which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service, namely that:
- The Children's Centre offer becomes 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. *Noting*, as key to this, that in 2013 the former children's centre family support resource shifted to become an integrated part of the Boroughs wider family

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support offer, aligned and coordinated based on need and demand to the Gateway and as part of targeted services.

- 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 see formal commissioning partnership arrangements drawn up between the Council and health visiting and the Council and Jobcentre Plus (as statutory partners). These will include agreements for effective and robust information sharing. This will see wherever possible a health visiting and Jobcentre Plus service delivered through Children's Centres and built around integrating delivery plans aligned through the outcomes framework (see page 7 review report).
- Staffing Structures are developed 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 Children's Centre activity.
- The review has considered savings through a reduced estate and associated cost, to allow the council to protect, as far as possible front line staff and service provision - acknowledging that people not buildings deliver services. The recommendation is therefore to secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated with DfE as full core purpose offer centres) in each of the four Constituency Localities. 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

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 14.1 The recommendations will ensure that the service can deliver to the funding available (achieving the required £2m budget reductions 2014-16).
- 14.2 The recommendations will ensure the Council responds effectively to the changes to Government guidance (2013) for children's centres.
- 14.3 The recommendations will ensure the Council meets its statutory responsibilities.

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14.4 The recommendations will also establish a viable working model and approach that is less dependant on buildings, that aligns with the developing neighbourhood offer and which can respond more flexibly to changing needs and requirements and which will future proof the service.

14.5 The recommendations and the review acknowledge that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

Briefing Note	Date

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet Report - Consultation Findings (what really matters) 2013	10.12.2013
Cabinet Commissioning of 6 Day Nursery Provision	13.6.2013
Council Budget	February 2013
Day Nursery Provision	7.7.2014