

1 February 2017		ITEM: 11
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Update on 21st Century Children's Centres Service		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Lead For School Improvement		
Accountable Head of Service: Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Lead For School Improvement		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This paper is to give members an update on the earlier paper 'Review of the Children's Centre Service', September 2017.

The new proposals seek to improve service delivery to the most vulnerable in the area where it is most needed. Working with colleagues from Public Health, Early Offer of Help and Troubled Families, the Council is developing an integrated 0-19 Wellbeing model, in which Children's Centres will play a major role. Under the new model, the offer to families will be strengthened by changing points of delivery, integrating services and ensuring services are cost effective. The aim is to provide an improved seamless service for the users, easier access, reduce duplication and to ensure a targeted offer to those most in need of support. This will be achieved through integrated working within the 0-19 Wellbeing Model including the Healthy Child programme, Early Offer of Help and Social Care.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The transfer of Public Health functions and the development of a 0-19 Wellbeing model provided the opportunity to develop a more sustainable Children's Centre delivery model in the current financial climate through delivery of an integrated offer. This presented an opportunity to redesign the model of delivery for Children's Centres whilst ensuring that the core work of the Children's Centres continues to be delivered to the same high standard.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to note the progress made.

3. Children's Centres

- 3.1 It is proposed that of the nine children's centre sites, the seven that are Thurrock Council owned will continue to be run as Children's Centres. Five of these will retain a full time receptionist, and all remaining centres will provide universal and targeted services on a timetabled basis.
- 3.2 Due to complications in the lease of the East Tilbury Children's Centre and the closure of the commissioned service provided by 4Children which has gone into liquidation, it became impossible to continue to run the service in the same way after 1 September 2016. Health visiting, midwifery and dental services are still delivered at the centre. The manager of the children's Centre has worked with the library service to enable some services to be delivered at East Tilbury Library. We are currently investigating the possibility of using a greater range of outreach sites than currently in use, to ensure those families with the greatest needs receive the targeted support needed to improve their life chances.
- 3.3 Analysis has shown that Beacon Children's Centre was largely underused during the period September 2015 to August 2016, with on average being less than 10 users a month for each of the Children Centre activities. The child health clinics had greater attendance – on average 28 users per month.
- 3.4 We will be delivering more Children's Centre activities from the schools in Chafford Hundred including Warren Primary, as opposed to the high cost facilities in the Beacon Church Hall.
- 3.5 It is proposed that subject to union and staff consultation that the service will move to a locality model with each locality being managed by one Children's Centre Manager. This will see a reduction in only 3 FTE posts. However due to a current vacancy it will result in two job reductions.
- 3.6 Currently parental outreach workers work with families for 12 weeks over a period of 24 weeks, this will change to 8 weeks over a period of 16 weeks. It is intended that in this time the family are enabled to access services at children's centres we can increase access while running fewer centres.
- 3.7 Currently facilitators work in one children's centre and deliver one or two groups per day on average. It is proposed, subject to union and staff consultation, that facilitators will work across the locality and will deliver approximately 4 sessions per day, increasing the output by 100% with fewer staff. We are confident this can be delivered based on our analysis of current activity and the sessions which attract most parents. While there will be a small reduction in staff, the

integration of services will lead to an expansion of the offer to a wider age-group. For example, sessions will also be provided by the troubled families and early offer of help teams for older children.

4. Stakeholder Consultation.

4.1 A six week consultation finished on 4 December 2016. It consisted of;

- Six public facing events (morning and evening in all three localities) publicised in different ways, 'flyers' being distributed in public places: Children's Centres, GP surgeries, Libraries, Health Clinics, Schools/Colleges, Early Years providers, Thurrock social media applications and websites, Healthwatch Thurrock, Ngage. Processes will be put in place to ensure key groups are accessed: young parents, parents on low incomes, parents with disabilities and parents of disabled children, the travelling community and residents with English as an additional language.
- Professionals event to include a wide range of partners
- Online consultation publicised in the same way as the public facing event with specific questions for adults and for children and young people.
- Engagement with children and young people through: the Youth Cabinet, Children in Care Council, School Councils, and through Healthwatch contacts with children and young people.
- The Thurrock Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), Thurrock Healthwatch, and the Youth Cabinet have been engaged to help us ensure the consultation is appropriate and reaches a wide audience.

4.2 The online questionnaire elicited 251 responses from adults and 196 from children and young people.

4.3 Despite the face to face meetings being widely publicised via the above partners, attendance was very low. The professionals' meeting was attended by approximately 35 professionals. On average the public meetings were attended by 1 person per meeting.

4.4 82% of those that responded felt that accessing services in one place was better but there were concerns about mixed ages and staff knowledge. Children Centre staff will continue to focus on families with children aged 0-5 years and will begin to work with targeted families with children aged 5-11 years after full training.

4.5 There were concerns about (adolescent/adult) e.g drug and alcohol services being offered at children centres whilst families with young children were attending. This is not an option that is being considered as these services can be provided at alternative times. Analysis of current centre use shows there is capacity to provide services later in the afternoon when younger children and their parents are no longer on the premises.

4.6 55% of respondents did not agree that the council should focus its children's centre services on those families that are most in need of support. However children's centres are required to target the most vulnerable families to break

the cycle of deprivation and improve the outcomes for children and young people across the borough. Universal services for all families will continue to be offered across the borough.

4.7 45% of respondents used the children's centres less than once per month.

5. Update – Current Position

5.1 The consultation with staff began on 5 January 2017 and will end on 6 February 2017. There will be staff reductions and a change of use of some main Children's Centre buildings, however it is anticipated that the majority of those at risk will be offered alternative employment within the Council. Voluntary redundancy will be offered to mitigate compulsory redundancy.

5.2 The Healthy Families Public Health specification is currently being developed with input from all stakeholders including children's centres. This will ensure that the current model of partnership working with midwives and health visitors will continue and improve.

5.3 An upgrade of the current children's centre data system has been procured which will reduce admin time and improve data storing and record keeping in children's centres. Work is underway to procure an IT system that will enable services to share one database to support the integrated service.

5.4 Mapping/ modelling of timetables of children' centre activity across the borough has taken place and it demonstrates that all timetabled children's centre services can be delivered in each locality.

5.5 Additional timetabled slots have been included for targeted families with children between the ages of 5-11 as part of the Council's approach to preventing demand for statutory social care services. This has enabled us to get better use out of existing provision which was not used at all during certain times of the day.

5.6 Meetings have been arranged with head teachers in targeted areas to develop outreach sites to mitigate the loss of two children centre sites and to strengthen partnership working across the borough.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Council Community Priorities

- create a great place for learning and opportunity
- encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- improve health and well-being

6.2 The impact of the changes proposed are reduced through the development of the 0-19 Wellbeing Model working with families in greatest need.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

The service redesign, improved joint working, co-location of services and joint commissioning of an ICT system will ensure a sustainable delivery model for the Children Centre Service and 0-19 Wellbeing model, maximising the opportunities afforded to the LA and contribute to making significant efficiencies towards the Children's Centre budgets. The integration of the HCP alongside other Council Services will support a streamlined service offering both value for money and efficiencies to both Public Health and Children's Services.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Chris Pickering**
Solicitor

Legislation about children's centres is contained in the Childcare Act 2006 Act as a place or a group of places:

- Which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way;
- Through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and
- At which activities for young children are provided.

Children Centres will continue to provide early childhood services and activities.

Efficiencies in buildings and staffing will be implemented in line with the Council's HR and Assets policies and procedures.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

The Children's Centres by their very nature have targets to reduce the inequalities and improved outcomes for the most disadvantaged families. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed before any changes are made to service delivery.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

If, following the review and consultation, there are further implications these will have been included in this report.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Report to Children's Overview & Scrutiny on the Children's Centre Review.

Report to Children's Overview & Scrutiny on the 0-19 Wellbeing Model.

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - Core Purpose of Children Centres in Thurrock.

Appendix 2 - Children's Centres Outcomes Framework.

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