

## **TITLE: Future sustainability of Children's Centres**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Derby has 18 Children's Centres which were developed in three phases, in line with the national rollout programme. As a result, the arrangements for centres are complex and work differently with the local school and community depending on the individual setting and circumstances.
- 1.2 All of the centres meet the 'core offer' however the range and frequency of activities, staffing models and resources, again reflect the different phases of the programme in which the centres have been developed.
- 1.3 The DfE is currently consulting on the core purpose of Children's Centres to provide further flexibility in their use. The core purpose requires services to particularly focus on the most disadvantaged families within the community. Further detail of the core purpose is set out in appendix 2.
- 1.4 This paper sets out a range of inter-related actions to maintain Children's Centres outlined in the Cabinet report of 7 June 2011.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To note the LA's commitment to maintaining Children's Centres to enable them to fulfil their core purpose of delivering services to children, young people and their families.
- 2.2 To note the progress made on a number of options, outlined in the Cabinet paper of 7 June. A further progress update will be provided in early 2012.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The LA is committed to maintaining 18 Centres. Work is currently being undertaken to secure the use of the Centres by partners including schools and provide opportunities for the resource to be used at other times by the community.
- 3.2 Recent proposed changes in DfE guidance on the 'core purpose' in contrast to the previous definition of the 'core offer' provides an opportunity to revisit the way in which Centres can work in future. The core purpose has a particular focus on:
  - Reducing inequalities in school readiness,

- Improving parental aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills, and
- Improving child and family health and life chances.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 At the 7 June Cabinet meeting it was agreed to maintain all Childrens Centres in the city. To realise this ambition a small project team was established to co-ordinate a number of work streams identified in the report.

4.2 Progress against the recommendations outlined in the 7 June report are noted below:

4.3 **Budgets:**

To secure the required budget savings by reprofiling budgets on a locality-wide basis, rather than the previous centre-by-centre model. This will ensure local service decisions are based on local need and give flexibility to funding decisions.

**Progress:**

- The setting of the Centres' budgets for 2011/12 has now been completed allowing the three localities Heads of Service the flexibility to manage resources across a locality rather than centre by centre.
- Further work is being undertaken to address the inconsistencies in management and overhead costs across all the Centres which have arisen due to the historic sequencing of phased implementations of the original Sure Start programme which reflected differing levels of funding. This includes:
  - working with Together for Children (T4C) to formulate an objective funding formula based on demographic data,
  - application to the national Payments by Results Children's Centre trial which would provide an indication of future sustainability in line with government funding,
  - reviewing nursery provision which also draws on Children's Centre budgets, including the tendering out of the neighbourhood nurseries, and
  - implementing stage 2 of the staffing changes (see 4.4 below).
- Actions will be addressed through future budget arrangements.

#### 4.4 **Staffing:**

To conduct an internal review of the frontline service delivery model ensuring alignment with wider locality arrangements.

##### **Progress:**

- This is a two stage process. Stage one involved a significant restructure of the Children's Centres management teams to a locality-wide model (one team for each of the three locality Heads of Service), thus increasing equality of the service offering across the city. This was completed in May.
- Stage two will take place during the coming year when work will be undertaken to establish a locality-wide 'hub' model for the remainder of the staffing teams. These hubs will enable a more flexible staff response in line with each centre's need, occupancy and activity level.
- Further opportunities will be considered in line with changes at Derby NHS for the delivery of universal child health services, including the expansion of the Health Visitor programme.

#### 4.5 **Back office processes, administration and management functions:**

To conduct an internal review of the backoffice processes, administration and management functions.

##### **Progress:**

Officers are working with the 'One Derby One Council' programme to identify where technology efficiencies from the programme can be utilised in the centres.

#### 4.6 **Reach targets:**

To review with partners the 'Reach Targets' to ensure that centres are performing effectively in supporting those families most in need.

##### **Progress:**

Officers are continuing with analysis work on the Children's Centre database information to provide further clarity on families reached by each of the Centres. This will then inform future commissioning decisions in line with the revised core purpose of Children's centres.

- 4.7 **Schools consultation regarding handover of centre management:**  
To continue discussions with schools in relation to the potential transfer of management arrangements for Children's Centres.

**Progress:**

- Officers met with a number of head teachers in June to progress these discussions. It is acknowledged that because of the complex nature of the development of the centres not all centres are conveniently aligned to a single school or community. Similarly not all schools want to take forward this management responsibility.
- It is therefore unlikely that all Centres will be managed by a school and a secondary alternative will be required.
- Officers have been working in partnership with Together for Children (T4C) to share the learning and experience of how such an arrangement has worked in other LA's.
- Derby has been asked to host a regional meeting coordinated and funded by T4C in early October to share the learning and challenges of this proposal with other LA's having acknowledged that this is a very complex area of work

<b>OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED</b>
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- 5.1 The opportunity for the management of Centres by schools is withdrawn and they are retained by the LA.
- 5.2 All Centres are put out to tender to the market because the LA can no longer sustain them.

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	Rita Silvester
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<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Rita Silvester, Service Director - Commissioning, Children and Young People Directorate Appendix 1: Implications
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<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 As outlined in the 7 June Cabinet report, work continues regarding:
- Consistent charging policies across the centres
  - Review of facilities management and existing contracts
  - Opening hours
  - Flexible models of service delivery
  - More effectively centrally commissioned services from a range of alternative providers.

**Legal**

- 2.1 The LA has a legal duty to provide a core offer of services to meet the reach targets of the communities the Centres serve. If this offer is not met or the Centre is used for alternative purposes the LA may be subject to claw back of the original Sure Start investment.

**Personnel**

- 3.1 Personnel changes from implementing a locality-wide staffing model are being factored into the current Council-wide HR change programme.

**Equalities Impact**

- 4.1 This will be completed in line with guidance on consultation for any major changes in the delivery model.

**Health and Safety**

- 5.1 None at this time

**Carbon commitment**

- 6.1 None at this time

**Value for money**

- 7.1 The Children's Centres review aims to produce a more cost-effective Children's Centre model.

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 8.1 There are links to the Council priorities, in particular:
- Giving you excellent services and value for money.

### **The core purpose of Children's Centres**

The DfE is currently undertaking a consultation exercise on the core purpose of Children's Centres. The intention behind the core purpose is to enable greater flexibility for local authorities and Children's Centers to commission services based on an assessment of local need.

The Government believes that Children's Centres should have a clear core purpose, focused on:

#### **Improving outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in:**

- child development and school readiness - supporting personal, social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language from pre-birth to age 5, so children develop as confident and curious learners and are able to take full advantage of the learning opportunities presented to them in school.

#### **Supported by improved:**

- parenting aspirations, building on strengths and supporting aspirations, so that parents and carers are able to give their child the best start in life.
- child and family health and life chances - promoting good physical and mental health for both children and their family; safeguarding; supporting parents to improve the skills that enable them to access education, training and employment; and addressing risk factors so that children and their families are safe, free from poverty and able to improve both their immediate wellbeing and their future life chances.

The Government is proposing to move beyond a list of services to be offered by Children's Centers in the core offer which was:

- Integrated Early Years Support and Childcare
- Child and Family Health Services
- Family Support - universal and targeted
- Adult Learning and access to Job Centre Plus services
- Outreach Services from other agencies/professionals
- Families' Information Service
- Childminding Support services.

In setting out the core purpose of Children's Centers it will allow LA's to move away from a list of prescribed activity set out in the previous core offer to an outcomes based specification. Using an outcomes base for the work of Children's Centers means the focus will be on providing services for the most disadvantaged families in order to:

- Reduce inequalities in school readiness.
- Increase parental aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills.
- Improve child and family health and life chances.

The proposed core purpose brings the freedom and flexibility to local leaders to be creative in achieving the above outcomes and in a way that meets the local community need.