

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

18 December 2014



Children's Centre Review Consultation Process

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with background information relating to the presentation on the Children's Centre Review consultation process. The presentation will be given to the committee by Carole Payne, Head of Children's Services.
2. The accompanying presentation seeks to provide reassurances to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that a robust consultation process was delivered.

Background

3. On 16 July 2014, the Council's Cabinet took the decision to hold a consultation about the future of Children's Centres across County Durham. On 31 July, 2014 following a request for call in of the decision, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board determined that having considered the information it would take no further action, in which case the decision made by the Cabinet would take immediate effect.
4. The public consultation ran for 12 weeks from 31 July 2014 and ended on 23 October 2014. The 2 proposals that were consulted on were:
 - The community delivery model – putting services closer to families and
 - The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain

Children's Centre Review

5. There are currently 43 Children's Centres across County Durham which were developed using the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000-2007 to ensure centres were situated where they were needed, closest to families experiencing significant disadvantage across a range of indicators.
6. Over the last 10 years Children's Centres have played an important role in the lives of children and families, offering a wide range of services and support. However, despite this children in County Durham are less ready to start school and fewer achieve a good level of development at the end of their reception year than others both regionally and nationally.
7. Additionally, the Council is facing the challenge of significant cuts to public funding. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) require savings of approximately £224 million from 2011-2017. The proposals that were consulted on, if approved by cabinet in spring 2015, would deliver MTFP 15/16 and 16/17 savings of approximately £1 million.

8. A robust and objective review of Current Children's centre provision was in line with the Early Years Strategy and the requirements of the Councils MTFP.
9. In reviewing the current Children's Centre arrangements we have:-
 - a. Carried out a 12 week public consultation involving all stakeholders and will be analysing feedback;
 - b. Reflected on the evolution of Children's Centres in County Durham and changes in policy direction between 1999 to date;
 - c. Analysed needs relating to deprivation, using the ¹Index of Deprivation 2010;
 - d. Considered the impact of our Children's Centres in relation to social, economic and learning outcomes;
 - e. Considered the inspection outcomes for our Children's Centres over the period 2010-14;
 - f. Considered the views of service users as expressed through service user surveys;
 - g. Considered the community venues for delivery of the proposed community delivery model;
 - h. Considered accessibility and distance to travel to potential community venues and
 - i. Considered the need to make required MTFP efficiency savings.

Methodology & Proposals

The Community Delivery Model

10. We want to make our service more accessible to children and families by delivering them closer to where families live. We want to do this by making better use of community buildings and facilities like libraries, schools, leisure and community centres, for the delivery of services to support children and families during their early years. This will move away from the requirement for families to come into Children's Centres to access support and services.
11. The 43 Children's Centres are currently grouped in to 15 "clusters" reflecting management areas. The proposal is that we maintain one main Children's Centre in each cluster. This will reduce the number of Children's Centres we have in County Durham from 43 to 15. These centres alongside an extensive and flexible network of community venues will deliver services across the cluster and provide a base for staff. We will find alternative uses for the other 28 centres to ensure services benefiting children and families can continue to be delivered.
12. The retained centre would accommodate staff to coordinate services across each cluster using a number of community venues in addition to home visits. These are the places families tell us they already go. Services will therefore be available from more venues, not less under this model.

¹ The Index of Deprivation has seven distinct domains: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Barriers to Housing and Services; Living Environment Deprivation; Crime.

43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain

13. The Index of Deprivation 2010 was a key indicator in determining the locations of Children's Centres that were proposed and consulted on. This ensured that our Children's Centres would be located where they are most needed and able to draw on a range of community provision to successfully engage families in the top 30% most deprived communities and those in greatest need of additional help.
14. It was proposed to retain one Children's Centre building in each cluster, thereby reducing the number of centres from 43 to 15. These 15 centres, alongside an extensive and flexible network of community venues would deliver services across each cluster and provide a base for staff.
15. A range of factors informed the proposals consulted on regarding which centres should be retained. Within each cluster, these were considered and the centre that represented the 'best fit' was proposed. The range of factors can be found in **Appendix 2**.
16. The recommendations on which Children's Centre buildings should be retained in each cluster formed part of the consultation, **Appendix 3**.

Recommendation

- 10 Members of the Children and young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:
 - a. Note the presentation on the consultation process and comment accordingly.

Background Papers

- Review of Children's Centres in County Durham - Cabinet 16 July 2014

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The proposals would enable efficiency savings in line with the County Council's Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP). The specific proposals in this report would deliver approximately £1 million from a rationalisation of buildings and a restructure of the staff resource designed to maximise savings whilst minimising reduction in the number of posts.

Additional costs relating to the new community delivery model have been identified and existing resources identified to fund this.

Staffing – A re-configuration of the staffing resource through a full HR exercise was undertaken in 2014 in line with the County Council's Policies and Procedures. This does not pre-determine the outcome on any decisions about Children's Centre buildings.

All relevant trade unions were consulted with accordingly.

Equality and Diversity - A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will form part of the final Cabinet Report.

Accommodation – The proposals to reduce the number of Children's Centre buildings could result in changes to accommodation arrangements.

Crime and Disorder - N/A

Human Rights - N/A

Consultation

A 12 week public consultation was undertaken between 31 July 2014 and 23 October 2014 involving all internal and external stakeholders. The consultation plan, delivery and analysis were all approved by the Consultation Officers Group (COG).

Appendix 2 - Factors considered to inform proposals of which 15 Children's Centres to retain that were consulted on.

Population:

1. the proportion of children aged 0-4 in the top 30% Super Output Areas (SOA) in the cluster who live in the centre's 'reach' area;
2. the proportion of all children aged 0-4 in the cluster who live in the centre's 'reach' area.

Practical issues:

3. the building's capacity to deliver services;
4. the building's capacity to accommodate those staff who work in the area.

Current use of the Children's Centre building:

5. the centre in the cluster that had the highest proportion (%) of all visits by children and parents to centres in the cluster between April 2011 and September 2013;
6. the centre in the cluster that had the highest proportion (%) of all visits by children and parents from the top 30% SOAs in the cluster area in the same period.

Financial issues

7. the centre in the cluster subject to the highest level of potential clawback from any funder;
8. the centre in the cluster with the highest level of potential clawback from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
9. whether a centre or space within it, may be needed to accommodate an increase in school places to 2017 (which might represent an opportunity to mitigate against the risk of clawback);
10. whether a centre, or space within it, may be needed to provide additional space for nursery places for vulnerable 2 year olds (as above).

The level of economic and social needs of the centre's reach area:

11. the centre in the cluster with the highest proportion (%) of 2 year olds in the cluster eligible for free nursery provision;
12. the centre in the cluster with the highest proportion (%) of children living in households in receipt of Child Tax Credit, Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance;
13. the centre in the cluster with the highest number per 1000 of children 'in need';
14. the centre in the cluster with the highest number per 1000 of children subject to a child protection plan;
15. the centre in the cluster with the highest number per 1000 of children 'looked after'.

The level of achievement of young children in the centre's reach area:

16. the centre in the cluster with the highest proportion (%) of children in the cluster not judged as achieving a 'good level of development' in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2013 (EYFSP '13 and '14);
17. the centre area where the % point gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers is widest (EYFSP '13 and '14).

All Children's Centre buildings are relatively new and condition surveys confirmed that none require significant capital investment.

Appendix 3 – Recommendations that were consulted on of which Children’s Centre to retain in each cluster

Locality	Children’s Centre (CC) Recommended to Retain	Children’s Centre Cluster	Children’s Centres in the Cluster
Consett and Stanley	Moorside CC	Consett	Leadgate, Benfieldside and Moorside
	Stanley CC	Stanley	Catchgate, Burnhope, Stanley and Craghead
Durham and Chester Le Street	Bullion Lane CC	Chester-le-Street	Pelton and Bullion Lane
	Brandon CC	Deerness Valley	Brandon, Ushaw Moor and Sacriston
	Laurel Avenue CC	Durham	Sherburn Hill, Laurel Avenue and Kelloe
Peterlee and Seaham	Easington CC	Easington	Easington and Murton
	Seaham CC	Seaham	Seaham
	Horden CC	Peterlee East	Horden and Blackhall
	Seascape CC	Peterlee Central	Seascape (Peterlee Centre) Howletch and Dene House
	Wheatley Hill CC	Peterlee West	Wheatley Hill, Wingate, Shotton, Haswell, Thornley
Ferryhill and Newton Aycliffe	Dean Bank CC	Ferryhill	Dean Bank, Chilton and Fishburn
	Tudhoe Moor CC	Spennymoor	Tudhoe Moor, Middlestone Moor and West Cornforth
	Newton Aycliffe CC	Newton Aycliffe	Newton Aycliffe and Shildon
Bishop Auckland and Barnard Castle	St Helen Auckland CC	Bishop Auckland	St Helen Auckland, Woodhouse Close and Coundon
	Willington CC	Durham Dales	Willington, Evenwood, Middleton-in-Teesdale and Weardale (Stanhope)