

## Health and Wellbeing Board

14 May 2015



## Update Report on the Outcome of the Children's Centre Review

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### Report of Carole Payne, Head of Children's Services, Children and Adults Services, Durham County Council

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the outcome of the Council's Cabinet on 18 March 2015 relating to the Review of Children's Centre Services in County Durham.

#### Background

2. On 18 March 2015, Durham County Council's Cabinet agreed to recommendations on the future of Children's Centre services in County Durham which was informed by a review of the Children's Centres and a 12 week public consultation.
3. The Council's medium term financial plan requires it to make savings of £225m over the 2011 to 2018 period. Savings targets of £136.9 million for 2014/15 will have been achieved by the end of 2014/15 however these are likely to increase.
4. In accordance with the Council's commitment to review all services, a savings target of approximately £1 million is expected to be achieved as part of the Children's Centre Review.
5. Under the national framework, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the emphasis is on delivering a broad set of skills and understanding necessary to prepare very young children for their journey through school. It aims to ensure they can learn and develop, are kept safe and healthy.
6. In County Durham, EYFS results show outcomes for children in their early years are worse for those living in the most deprived circumstances when compared with their peers.
7. Historically contact with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families has proven a challenge in the County and the Council has introduced a wide range of services to address this including Think Family, Family Pathfinder Services, Family Intervention Teams and the Stronger Families programme. This approach is already delivering results.

8. A pilot project in Chester-le-Street is already delivering real improvements for families taking part and the shift from buildings to a broader community based support network will improve many young lives.
9. A full review of the Children's Centre service delivery model was required to make sure effective use is made of the Council's resources in order to achieve maximum impact and to meet the principles contained in the Early Years Strategy, which are to:
  - Target support to those who need it most.
  - Ensure the provision of accessible services.
  - Use resources flexibly.
  - Ensure effective community engagement in early years delivery.
  - Continually develop an expert workforce.
  - Improve outcomes for the County's children.
10. The proposals that were consulted on were:
  1. **The Community Delivery Model**

The consultation proposed the development of a Community Delivery Model which would take services closer to where children and families live and also make better use of community buildings.
  2. **The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain**

It was proposed to retain one Children's Centre building in each of the 15 cluster areas, thereby reducing the number of designated Children's Centers from 43 to 15. These 15 centres, alongside an extensive and flexible network of community venues would deliver services across each cluster area.

### **Outcome of March 2015 Cabinet Decision - Key Messages**

- The changes are designed to make sure outcomes for children during their early years are improved and to ensure families most in need of support receive it.
- A community delivery model will be used which means services will be delivered closer to where children and families live from community buildings families already go to. There will be no reduction in services.
- The 43 'designated' Children's Centres will reduce to 15 designated Children's Centres but **no** buildings are closing. The 28 buildings which will not be retained as designated Children's Centres will either transfer to schools or other providers who will continue to offer services for children.

## The 15 Children's Centres

11. Cabinet agreed the following would be retained as designate Children's Centres:-

<b>1</b>	<b>Moorside Children's Centre</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Stanley Children's Centre</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Bullion Lane Children's Centre</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Brandon Children's Centre</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Laurel Avenue Children's Centre</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Easington Children's Centre</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Seaham Children's Centre</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Horden Children's Centre</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Seascape Children's Centre</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Wheatley Hill Children's Centre</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Dean Bank Children's Centre</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Tudhoe Moor Children's Centre</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Newton Aycliffe Children's Centre</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Woodhouse Children's Centre</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Willington Children's Centre</b>

12. Arrangements are being finalised for each of the 28 buildings that will be transferred. Transfers are expected to take place between April and October 2015.
13. It is expected that some Children's Centre services will continue to be delivered from the buildings that will be transferred, subject to negotiations.
14. Separate discussions are taking place with Daycare providers; there is no intention to reduce daycare provision.
15. Families can choose to access Children's Centre services from whichever venue they are being delivered. Families are not expected to travel to the retained Children's Centres. Services and activities will continue to be provided from a range of community venues.
16. Activity timetables will be available on a termly basis in advance. Copies of these can be accessed in hard copy from the retained Children's Centres, in libraries and other community venues or electronically via our Facebook pages (links are available at [www.durham.gov.uk/onepoint](http://www.durham.gov.uk/onepoint) ) or from <http://www.surestartcountydurham.org/Pages/Activities.aspx>
17. During this current transition period, timetables will be produced for the half term following Easter and are available on the links above.

18. The full Cabinet Report on the Review of Children's Centre Services in County Durham at can be viewed at:  
<http://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=7388>. This details the consultation process and feedback received.

### **Recommendations**

19. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
- Note the contents of this report.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

The agreed proposals will enable efficiency savings in line with the County Council's Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Children's Centre Review will 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 which proposed a revised staffing structure was undertaken in 2014 in line with the County Council's Change Management Policies and Procedures. Staff and Trade Unions were fully consulted throughout. This will deliver annual savings of £244,722 from 1 April 2015. The revised structure has secured as many frontline posts as possible within the financial envelope available following the delivery of the MTFP saving. This restructure will deliver a total reduction of 11.83wte posts, however vacancies and requests for ER/VR has ensured these savings were achieved with no compulsory redundancies. The new staffing structure is required to deliver the core offer, regardless of the configuration of Children's Centres across the County.

### **Risk**

There is a potential financial risk associated with the clawback of funding. The Project Team has maintained a 'risk log' to highlight any concerns regarding the progress of the review and this is considered on a weekly basis. The risk of financial clawback to the Council is low as alternative providers will continue to fulfil the conditions of grant.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found in the Cabinet Report.

### **Accommodation**

The agreed 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). The Consultation process was also approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 18 December 2014.

**Procurement**

Transfers to third party providers that are not schools will take account of the Durham Ask and, where necessary, advertise lease agreements on the open market. The advert for the lease will stipulate that any conditions of grant associated with the Children's Centre building would need to be met and where required, in line with the Council's Sufficiency Duty, will stipulate that daycare provision would need to continue to be provided.

**Disability Issues**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed following the consultation and consideration of the recommendations on all stakeholders, regardless of their ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

**Legal Implications**

The agreed proposals set out in the full Cabinet Report are consistent with the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to Children's Centres as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and associated Sure Start Statutory Guidance 2013.