

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

1 SEPTEMBER 2016

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs McCoy

EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES: CONSULTATION ON FUTURE APPROACH

1. Summary

The report seeks approval to consult on a new vision and proposed approach to the provision of early years support in Stockton, including the future model for children's centres. It sets out the vision and objectives of a new approach, and a set of proposals for implementation. It outlines the approach to consultation. It recommends that a report be brought back to Cabinet in December, bringing back the outcomes from consultation, and recommendations.

2. Recommendations

Members are requested to agree the proposals for consultation.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To commence a consultation process on the proposals.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

1 SEPTEMBER 2016

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES: CONSULTATION ON FUTURE APPROACH

SUMMARY

The report seeks approval to consult on a new vision and proposed approach to the provision of early years support in Stockton, including the future model for children's centres. It sets out the vision and objectives of a new approach, and a set of proposals for implementation. It outlines the approach to consultation. It recommends that a report be brought back to Cabinet in December, bringing back the outcomes from consultation, and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Agree the proposals for consultation.
2. Agree to receive a report back at the December Cabinet.

DETAIL

Context and basis of our proposed approach

1. The proposed approach is to fundamentally review the approach for early years in Stockton, recognising the roles of different sectors and providers.
2. The focus is on the support available to families in the early years, often referred to as pregnancy, birth and beyond. The approach is especially focused on the support available from pregnancy to 2, as it is widely recognised that these are the most critical times in promoting child development and wellbeing.
3. However, in considering the role of agencies and the model of delivery, our approach also recognises the need to consider early years support in the context of the wider early help approach which was agreed at Cabinet in July 2016, and that families continue to need support when children start and attend school, and therefore that they need to be seen in the context of an approach to 0-19 services.
4. The approach suggested is therefore much broader than a focus solely on children's centres, though these form an important part of the overall picture. The approach is therefore more about a whole system approach, which is focused on:
 - a. The needs of parents and what support they value;
 - b. How we can support effective and confident parenting;

- c. How we can work with families and communities to develop solutions and effective services to support those most in need.

The drivers for change

5. There are four main drivers for us to think about a new approach:
 - a. Changing policy and regulatory context
 - b. Early help and family focus
 - c. Improving outcomes for the best start in life for those most in need
 - d. Effectiveness and value for money
6. In terms of the **changing policy and regulatory context**, the Ofsted regulatory framework for the inspection of children's centres has been suspended, pending a review. The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) has recently issued a report on the future of children's centres, which proposes a shift towards the idea of 'family hubs' as more all age, community focused and more integrated centres.
7. **Early help and family focus.** Members have recently approved a new approach to early help, which prioritises the development of clear pathways through the various levels of early help – universal, secondary prevention and targeted. The approach for early years will sit in this framework, and will prioritise a focus on helping to support families to be confident and effective parents because:
 - a. We know that is a crucial time for parents, when good effective parenting can make a huge difference to the outcomes for children.
 - b. The support families receive ranges from midwives, to health visitors, children's centres, childcare and possibly additional services such as speech and language therapy. There can be lots of agencies and people involved, across the Council, the local health sector and the voluntary sector.
 - c. In some cases, these services are, or can appear to be, working in isolation, and although here is lots of good activity, and lots of good practice, it sometimes doesn't feel like a system which supports families, one which also recognises the role that immediate family, friends and wider social networks plays.
 - d. For too many parents and carers, their experiences of the system as a whole isn't positive, which is a problem, as it is parents and carers who give children the best start in life, not services.
8. **Improving outcomes.** Although the quality of our early years provision is excellent, we know that we continue to face significant issues across the early years system, such as:
 - a. Children's centres have good reach into their communities, but it is not always possible to demonstrate the impact of our interventions;
 - b. We continue to have some challenges on Early Years Foundation Stage scores, though these are improving;
 - c. We have high rates of children classed as obese or overweight;
 - d. We have poor rates of breastfeeding;
 - e. Ensuring interventions are effectively targeted.
9. Therefore, any new approach should have a clear focus on improving outcomes across the system, through a clear offer, but with a specific focus on ensuring that services are targeted on those most in need.
10. **Financial.** There is less funding available than previously to continue to deliver the same set of services across the Council, health partners and the voluntary sector. We think some of this current funding is not being spent as wisely as we would like, and we have not had

as big a focus on secondary prevention – i.e. profiling vulnerability and working with families before an early help assessment is in place.

The objectives of a new approach

11. In developing a new approach, the following objectives are proposed. We want to develop an early years system for families which:
- a. empowers families, recognising their vital role, puts them at the centre, and emphasises the role of services in supporting families;
 - b. focuses more on establishing networks of support in communities, rather than on requiring families to access services which are delivered from a small number of centres;
 - c. develops the role of volunteers, acting as family mentors to support families;
 - d. streamlines processes and services and how to access them - ensuring services are working to shared objectives, and are sharing information where possible, and which reduces duplication or lack of join up. This will include co-location and technology;
 - e. emphasises early help, as part of a wider early help model. This includes ensuring that there are universal, preventative and targeted offers in place.

Outcomes we are seeking to achieve

12. The key outcomes of a new approach are:
- a. For children: healthy, ready to learn, safe and supported;
 - b. For parents: know where to get help; know how to parent well; trust practitioners to support them;
 - c. Communities and networks: to be involved and to support families;
 - d. Practitioners: to focus on families; to work to a shared vision and objectives; to be skilled and have confidence in practice making a difference.

An outline of a new approach

13. Therefore, in order to respond to the key drivers for change, the objectives and the outcomes we want to achieve, we want to develop a new approach, based on the following key aspects:
- a. **A clear and understandable model** which is clear about what help is available and how to access it, as a set of shared commitments with families. This will be based on the following:
 - i. **Universal...i.e. all families with 0-5s will get the following:**
 1. Support from maternity services, and we will be explicit about what families should expect to receive;
 2. Statutory visits from Health Visitors;
 3. The opportunity to participate in stay and play, though this might be delivered in a more flexible way than currently – it might be accessed at a variety of community buildings, and we will be supporting more parents groups to run their own sessions;
 4. Access to events and activities in community centres, leisure centres, libraries;
 5. Access to affordable, high quality childcare;
 6. Access to employment support and advice;
 7. 3 and 4 year old universal free education provision (to be extended to 30 hours per week from September 2017 for eligible families);

8. An enhanced online support offer, building on the Stockton Information Directory for families, and developing the concept of an online / virtual family hub.

ii. **Preventative** - based on mapping and identifying vulnerability (geography, qualification for 2 year old free education entitlement and other local intelligence) we will, on top of the above, create a system which includes:

1. Outreach visits over and above those provided by Health Visitors;
2. Provision of family mentoring advice and guidance, including development of a volunteer base (part of wider early help offer, ie open to all ages);
3. Services provided from a network of Family Hubs as the focus of the offer;
4. Some, largely group based, parenting activities – focused on attachment, language and communication;
5. Toy library and other shared materials;
6. Home Safety Loan Scheme.

iii. **Targeted** – for those families where additional support is provided, this will be assessed through Health Visitors and early help assessment. This will provide additional support, based on need, including:

1. Early Help Assessment, Team Around the Family and lead practitioner model;
2. Access to parenting programmes (and being clear what these are eg Triple P, Family Therapy, Family Group Conferencing);
3. Refocused speech and language, CAMHS, behaviour support services to tackle identified need.

14. Where there are concerns over welfare and safeguarding, referrals will continue to be made for social care assessment through the Children's Hub as now.

a. Workforce development to create greater integration of support

- i. Building on the shared workforce models being developed in A Fairer Start;
- ii. Shared and integrated assessment / interaction pathways – so parents and carers are clearer about who is doing what and confident that information is shared;
- iii. An emphasis on working with family strengths rather than delivering programmes;
- iv. Common, shared outcomes and set of objectives, which may include the Health Visitor taking on the role of coordinating outreach workers and mentors and volunteers;
- v. Co-location of agencies where practicable.

b. A revised model for children's centres, based on the establishment of a network of Family Hubs

- i. More focused on people than buildings;
- ii. Fewer hubs, more targeted on areas of need;
- iii. Needs based and targeted focus, though retaining a universal offer;
- iv. Moving towards greater control by families and communities;
- v. An emphasis on outreach and locality working, including the opportunity for family mentoring approaches.

c. A bigger focus on building family capacity

- i. The use of volunteers as 'coaches' or 'mentors' for families where there is no requirement for more specialist support and intervention, but where families need ongoing advice, guidance and signposting;
- ii. Social activities and social prescribing approaches;
- iii. Help in the home around reading, talking, interaction and attachment

Implications for delivery

15. Delivering the above would require some or all of the following to be in place:
 - a. We would be explicit about refocusing the children's centres as Family Hubs, based on need, and therefore operating from a smaller number of buildings. Some existing facilities would be needed to be able to provide the extended 30 hour offer for families with eligible 3 and 4 year olds. There may also be options to transfer assets to local communities at a future point;
 - b. We would invest more in peer mentoring / volunteer approaches, building on the Fairer Start model. We would potentially commission this, and it would form part of a wider early help preventative approach;
 - c. We would ensure the role of the health visitors to be around the delivery of the statutory visits and then managing this expanded outreach workforce;
 - d. This would build on the integrated workforce model and shared skills approach developed in Fairer Start;
 - e. We would designate a larger number of early help access points eg community centres and libraries where we would deliver from;
 - f. We would have a bigger focus on preventative / intelligence actions – using the information we have across agencies to identify families who might be at greater risk of doing less well, and supporting them. We think this will ultimately reduce the need for more specialist services.

Consultation approach and process

16. Informal consultation and information gathering was undertaken in May based on users of children's centres. A summary of the outcomes from this process is included at Annex 1.
17. We propose to consult further on the following:
 - a. The overall vision and objectives of the early years system for families;
 - b. The basis of the universal offer for all families;
 - c. The future role and remit of children's centres, including our proposals to establish a smaller network of family hubs;
 - d. The proposed arrangements for the delivery of the offer in each current children's centre area, including what services will be available and how to access them.
18. The consultation process will include:
 - a. A consultation document setting out the vision and objectives will be available to support online consultation through the consultation portal;
 - b. A series of workshops will be held with partners and stakeholders
 - c. Discussion sessions with parents will be held in each children's centre. Annex 2 provides further details of the proposals for engaging with parents.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

19. This is a first stage report and a Community Impact Assessment will be taken to Cabinet with the final report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no direct financial implications arising from this consultation process, which will be managed through existing resources. The implications of a move to a new model will be considered as part of a future report to cabinet, following the consultation process, in December 2016.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no new legal implications from this Report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

22. This issue is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. Individual elements in the approach link to specific risk assessments.

COUNCIL PLAN THEMES

23. The approach has clear proposals for:
- a. Protecting the most vulnerable through the proposals for early help, assessment and targeting of services;
 - b. Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention through the emphasis on early intervention, prevention, targeted and specialist services;
 - c. Developing strong and healthy communities through the continued emphasis on the provision of universal and open access support.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

24. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment because it does not relate to a new policy or strategy at this stage. An EIA will be undertaken to support the future report to Cabinet in December 2016.

CORPORATE PARENTING

25. The strategy does not directly impact on Looked After Children, but does form part of a range of interventions to help prevent children from having to come into care.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

26. The Children and Young People's Partnership, Local Safeguarding Children Board and Health and Wellbeing Board as well as the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People have been consulted on the development of these proposals.

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Gray
Post Title: Assistant Director, Early Help, Partnership and Planning
Telephone No: 01642 527043
Email Address: martin.gray@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers

None.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not applicable.

Property

There are no implications for Council property arising directly from this report. Proposals for the current network of children's centres will be considered as part of the consultation, and will be included in the report back to Cabinet in December.

Annex 1 – outcomes form initial information gathering

Parent Information Gathering sessions Thursday 12th and Friday 13th May 2016

The purpose of the information gathering sessions was to seek views from parents regarding Early Years services across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The sessions were conducted in 10 venues and 201 parents participated in the process.

Frederick Nattrass Children's Centre (52) Sunrise Children's Centre (27) High Flyers Children's Centre (11) Riverbank Children's Centre (14) Footsteps Children's Centre (34) The Star Children's Centre (10) Redhill Children's Centre (12) Barley Fields Children's Centre (27) Layfield Children's Centre (5) Elm Tree Children's Centre (9)

Parents accessed various services throughout the 2 days with the majority accessing Early Years sessions (60 parents = 34% of participants). (See appendix A for session information)

Parents were asked 'what type of services they valued the most' and the highest valued service was Early Years Stay and Play sessions (93 parents = 46% of participants) Health services were also highly valued (Health Visiting services 66 parents valued highly = 33% of participants. (Baby Clinic service 65 parents valued = 32% of participants) (Ante Natal/Midwife service 63 parents valued = 31% of participants) (See appendix B for % of participants)

The results from the question 'Would you like services available close to where you live?' demonstrated that:

(137 parents answered YES = 68%)

(8 parents answered NO = 4%)

(56 parents answered DON'T MIND = 27%)

The results from the question 'Would you like some services to be available in your own home?' demonstrated that:

(70 parents answered YES = 35%)

(74 parents answered NO = 37%)

(57 parents answered DON'T MIND = 28%)

The results from the question 'Would you like the services to be available at different times of the day?'

(58 parents answered 'Early Morning' = 29%)

(44 parents answered 'Evening' = 22%)

(56 parents answered 'Weekend' = 28%)

(42 parents answered 'Don't Mind' = 21%)

(1 parent felt that the services should be more in line with school times)

(See appendix A for venue statistical breakdown)

Views from parents/grandparents were also collected with the main themes presented as:

1-General Advice and Information given within services

2-Help with learning and work situations

3-Safety of the services

4-Suggestions regarding additional sessions and times of days for services

5-Social aspects of the services and peer support processes.

Annex 2 – draft consultation questions for parents

- Q1 Are you responding primarily as a.....
- Parent/Expectant parent/Carer
 - Professional
 - Other
- Q2 What are the first 4 letters/numbers of your postcode?
- Q3 Do you currently use a Children's Centre?
- Yes
 - No
- Q4 If you have answered yes to question 3 which centres do you use? Tick all that apply.
- Footsteps
 - New Life
 - Northern
 - Redhill
 - Frederick Natrass
 - Star
 - Sunrise
 - Elm Tree
 - High Flyers
 - Riverbank
 - Barley Fields
 - Layfield
- Q5 How important is it for you to have access to local childcare?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important
 - Not sure
- Q6 30 hours free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds will become available from September 2017, for working parents, is this something you would be interested in?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- Q7 Based on the information we have provided, how important do you feel it is to make sure that the proposed 'Family Hubs' focus on providing services to those families that require the most support?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important
 - Not sure
- Q8 To what extent do you agree with the proposal to have 5 'Family Hubs' supported by a number of local community venues?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree/disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- Q6 Thinking about the 'Family Hub' you would be most likely to use, when would you prefer it to be open?
- 5 days per week with the same opening hours each day
 - 5 days per week with varied opening hours each day
 - 6 days per week with the same opening hours each day
 - 6 days per week with varied opening hours each day
- Q7 Support and services – We are keen to encourage and enable the local community and parents/carers to run their own activities and events for local children and their families. To achieve that we propose to make space available in other buildings. To what extent do you agree with the proposal?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree/disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- Q8 If space was made available for the local community and parents/carers to run activities for other families, how interested would you be in running a group in your area? (question for parents only.)
- Very interested
 - Interested
 - Not very interested
 - Not interested at all
- Q9 We are interested in developing our existing Information Directory for Families to include access to on line parenting courses, guidance and information on a range of parenting issues and other 'virtual' parenting resources. Would you find this useful?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure