

Review of Children's Centres

Briefing for Children and Young People Select Committee

Operating context

- In 2011 Stockton reviewed the Children's Centre delivery model and management arrangements with associated reductions to the Early Intervention Grant. A hybrid retained/commissioned model was put in place in Spring 2012. Of 12 Children's Centres, 4 were retained and run by the Council (in the areas of highest deprivation) and the remainder were commissioned to delivery partners – Big Life Company and 4Children. Robust quality assurance including annual conversations were established for all centres – retained and commissioned. There have been regular performance reports to Cabinet.
- In the MTFP presented to Cabinet in May 2013 Children's Centres were identified and required to make savings on 469k. As financial arrangements for the commissioned centres are in place until 2017, these efficiencies were to be made from the budgets for the retained Centres. This resulted in a Review in Autumn 2015. A new structure is now in place (from Jan 16) and the budget for the Council's retained Children's Centres is now £895,598. By March 2016 savings of 462,613, as required from the 2013 MTFP will have been made.
- A further MTFP update to Cabinet in July 2015 included Children's Centres as requiring a comprehensive, Borough-wide review in order to make further savings. This briefing note sets out an overview of the proposal to achieve these additional savings.
- It should be noted that there is, currently, a national government review of Children's Centres, which will be taken into account as we progress the work in Stockton. Similarly, we will ensure that any remodelling of Children's Centres reflects the work underway relating to Early Intervention and Health developments, the Fairer Start initiative and volunteering in communities.

Comprehensive Borough-wide review

The proposal for future working involves a fundamental review of Children's Centres right across the Borough and will outline a redesign of Children's Centre services, potentially including significantly reducing the number of Children's Centres and moving to a model of children's centre hubs whilst ensuring a focus upon serving the most disadvantaged communities and delivering 'targeted additional support' for 0-3s alongside adult learning, outreach/community development and volunteering. The model of delivery for crèche and stay and play provision will be reviewed and some buildings may be utilised to deliver commissioned childcare. Health will continue to be a key component and schools and local childcare providers will be involved in the delivery of appropriate universal health services. It is acknowledged that this new way of working will require commitment from other partners e.g. schools, health, childcare providers in the delivery of services

Timeline

April 2016	-	Report to Cabinet with proposal for consultation
May 2016	-	Public consultation
June/July 2016	-	Final report to Cabinet with final recommendations
July 2016 – March 2017	-	Work on implementation of new model

Lynda Brown [January 2016]