

 <p data-bbox="277 528 496 595">Brent</p>	<p data-bbox="831 320 1190 405" style="text-align: center;">Cabinet 10 November 2014</p> <p data-bbox="616 501 1402 595" style="text-align: center;">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p data-bbox="188 651 336 680">For Action</p>	<p data-bbox="1023 667 1251 734" style="text-align: center;">Wards Affected: ALL</p>
<p data-bbox="188 792 1046 837" style="text-align: center;">Future Development of Children's Centres</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out proposals to consult with staff and service users on the development of a sustainable model for the borough's children's centres provision to be implemented from September 2015. The aim of this process would be to retain and current service levels, while improving outputs and outcomes for 0 to 5 year olds while delivering efficiency savings.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves officers commencing a programme of consultation and engagement with service users, staff and other stakeholders, reporting back to Cabinet in January 2015 with proposals for a sustainable model of delivery for the children's centres.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Brent's children's centres provide:
- Services that support school readiness, health and wellbeing and effective parenting outcomes for families with children aged 0-4, particularly those with greater levels of need.
 - Multi agency support with onsite delivery of health visiting, midwifery services, Job Centre Plus, adult education and CAB plus other voluntary sector providers.
 - Early intervention: using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to identify family concerns, promote safeguarding and link with social care.

3.2 Current service locations are as follows:

3.2.1 Harlesden locality

- Curzon Crescent (and Challenge satellite)
- Fawood
- Harmony
- St Raphael's

3.2.2 Kilburn locality

- Granville Plus
- Three Trees (and Hope satellite)

3.2.3 Kingsbury locality

- Church Lane (and Mt Stewart satellite)
- Willow including Willow Nursery

3.2.4 Wembley locality

- Alperton
- Welcome (and Barham Library satellite)
- Wembley Primary (and Preston Park satellite)

3.2.5 Willesden locality

- Treetops
- Wykeham

3.3 Over the last year, Ofsted has begun to inspect children's centres on a locality basis. For a 'good' service, they expect to find evidence that at least 80 per cent of families with children aged 0-4 are known to children's centres and at least 65 per cent of 'target group' households are engaged in outcomes based support. The target group comprises households where no adults are in paid work, families that have a CAF, or are assessed as a Child in Need, on a Child Protection Plan, Looked After or who qualify for the two year old free entitlement for Nursery Education Grant or children with disabilities/additional needs.

3.4 Ofsted also expects to see quality and impact of practice and services with evidence of the extent to which target group children and families are securing positive outcomes in relation to child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances. They also expect to see effective governance, leadership and management. Advisory boards and parents must be involved in supporting and challenging the CC's work and setting priorities for improvement. The Ofsted ratings of our children's centre localities are as follows, with the last three inspections having achieved 'good':

Willesden - Requires improvement, awaiting re-inspection

Kingsbury - Requires improvement, awaiting re-inspection

Wembley T1 - Good

Wembley T2 - Good

Harlesden T1 - Good

Harlesden T2 - Not yet inspected, inspection due

Kilburn - Not yet inspected, inspection due

- 3.5 In 2011/12 the change to a locality model of working created more consistent and efficient working whereby shared management and staff teams operate across multiple sites. This has also led to a significant increase in partner delivery of services in children's centres (especially health visiting, midwifery and Job Centre Plus). Central management was reduced substantially, refocused on Brent's statutory obligations for sufficiency of children's centres, performance management and ensuring integrated early childhood services.
- 3.6 This model of working is contributing to the centres achieving their targets in attracting the most disadvantaged families as well as delivering improved outcomes for children and families, with increasing numbers of children from target families being ready for school, increased number of families where a CAF has been in place who do not require Social Care intervention. The completion rates of accredited parenting programmes are good with impact on parenting for some of the most vulnerable families.

Statutory obligations – children's centres

- 3.7 The Childcare Act 2006 makes local authorities responsible for the provision of children's centres, working with partners in health and Job Centre Plus particularly to ensure integrated early childhood services from children's centres and to meet obligations about the inspection of children's centres.
- 3.8 The statutory guidance for children's centres (May 2012) and the Ofsted inspection framework for children's centres (April 2013) emphasise the essential role of local authorities in ensuring sufficient children's centres to deliver positive outcomes for families with young children, particularly for families with greater levels of need. In addition, local authorities must ensure:
- 3.8.1 good quality performance management of children's centres with requirements to set and monitor progress against targets and to provide outcomes and profile data of the reach area.
- 3.8.2 children's centres conform with all safeguarding requirements and have links with Children's Social Care to address any safeguarding needs as quickly as possible.
- 3.8.3 integrated services that support school readiness, health wellbeing and effective parenting outcomes for families with children aged 0-4 years, particularly those with greater levels of need. This to be jointly with partners including Health and Job Centre Plus.
- 3.9 Under section 98C of the Childcare Act 2006, the local authority's obligations in relation to Ofsted framework of inspection for children's centres emphasises contact with at least 65 per cent of target families actively engaged in support available from children's centres as the minimum expectation for a 'good' children's centre.

Current budget situation and organisation

- 3.10 For 2014/15 the direct children's centre budget is £2.512m.
- 3.11 The service is led by the Head of Early Years and Family Support who also sits on all of the Advisory Boards to offer support and challenge, is required to be part of any Ofsted inspection and involved in drawing up subsequent action plans.
- 3.12 Children's centres receive support from the central Early Years Team in terms of training, quality and data/performance monitoring. They also receive central support for budget monitoring, management, HR support, and Health and Safety support with some centres receiving support from property and asset management.
- 3.13 Each locality has a Business Support Officer managed through the BIBS service but based in a children's centre. The budgets for these support services sit outside the current children's centres budget but could be impacted by the proposed changes described below.
- 3.14 There are a number of contracts covering services such as speech and language service in the centres and one with Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver a service in children's centres. These are essential to meet core outcomes and provide a high quality service. There are also various spot purchased, smaller contracts for other service delivery but children's centre staff and strategic partners (particularly health and JCP) deliver most of the services. The two main contracts cost approx. £600K and a new two year contract was agreed starting April 2014.
- 3.15 A provider is also commissioned centrally to deliver crèche facilities across the centres. This is an essential element to both deliver high quality experience for young children and to enable parents/carers to attend groups/trainings (parenting, adult education, preparation for work, etc) knowing their children are well cared for on site.

Current and proposed change programme

- 3.16 The change programme for children's centres to deliver savings and a sustainable service going forward is in three phases:
- 3.17 **Phase One** comprised the deletion of children's centre locality management from the organisational structure (one tier of middle management). The statutory functions for sufficiency, integrated early childhood service planning and performance management were incorporated into the central team of Early Years and Family Support Service. Consultation took place with three affected members of staff and the posts were deleted from the structure from 1 April 2014 with the full budget saving of £154k being achieved for 2014/15.
- 3.18 **Phase Two** comprises the reconfiguration of Barham Library Children's Centre, St Raphael's Intergenerational Centre and Treetops Children's Centre to provide children's centre nursery places via private and voluntary providers. This change was approved by Cabinet in July and the early years team is working with Property Services and Legal Services to develop suitable agreements and get the new provision in place.

- 3.19 **Phase Three proposal.** The proposed third phase of change is to develop a new model of delivery. It is proposed to consult service users, staff and other stakeholders on a proposal to tender the management and day to day governance of the children's centres to an experienced provider with that provider taking on the running of the buildings, the employment and management of staff and the responsibility for service delivery to meet the core offer requirements.
- 3.20 Under this model the selected provider will resource and develop the required universal services and the Local Authority will fund the targeted Early Intervention services for the most vulnerable families. Under this model the strategic role for the Early Years Service will be to secure good quality children's centres, challenge practice and performance management, supporting good Ofsted outcomes and focusing resources on the targeted households and other families with additional needs.
- 3.21 Essentially this model attempts to deliver a similar level of service to the current model (or potentially better) for a reduced level of resourcing from the local authority. It looks to future sustainability, since external service providers will have the ability to leverage in additional funds from their own contacts for example the National Lottery, European funding, etc which the current service, as a council service, cannot access.
- 3.22 The partnership delivery model proposed is one that has been put in place in other local authorities and there are several strong providers present in the market. The contract would specify outcomes from the centres and the council would fund the targeted work, while the contractor would be expected to provide universal services using volunteers and by raising funding from other sources. They would be given the use of the buildings such that they could diversify community use if it contributed to the essential aims of the children's centres and the core services were successfully delivered. This has the potential for wider community benefits.
- 3.23 The local authority would retain its statutory responsibilities around sufficiency, quality and data provision to whoever manages the service and any agreement will specifically address this and allow access and opportunity to fulfil the requirements.
- 3.24 This recommendation to consult excludes the children's centres managed by SLA by the Governing Body of Curzon and Fawood Maintained Nursery schools (Fawood, Curzon and Challenge House children's centres). This is because at these centres, the children's centre functions are fully integrated within the Fawood and Curzon Children's Centre Partnership with efficiency in terms of support and overheads as well as good outcomes. The Partnership Governing Body through an SLA has responsibility for three sites, including Challenge House.
- 3.25 The Curzon and Fawood Partnership SLA operates without any payment for overheads such as HR, ITU or business support. This Partnership also draws less on the central team, in terms of training, pre-post Ofsted support, etc since they operate with the autonomy of a school.
- 3.26 The physical integration of centre and nursery provision is complete in particular at Fawood where it was built as an integrated centre, so that to change or disaggregate this would be difficult and costly.

- 3.27 The Partnership has had successive successful children's centre Ofsted inspections; indeed the latest report highlights the quality of the work that could support others and the headteacher is currently seconded part time to lead the quality team in the local authority. The leadership of the Partnership has also been utilised to work and support other centres over time. It would not be appropriate to change this successful partnership arrangement and keeping this outside the proposed contract is not thought, at this stage, to affect the viability of the package.

Experience of other local authorities

- 3.28 Clearly children's centre cost savings are a live issue for the majority of local authorities. It appears from discussion with London DCSs that other London authorities are achieving cost savings by moving to a locality model and therefore reducing management and staff costs by having a team working across a group of centres. This saving has been banked already in Brent. Some local authorities have closed a large number of children's centres and diminished the service.
- 3.29 Information on other authorities' approach to savings is limited but Appendix One shows the experience of four local authorities in going down the partnership route

The process

- 3.30 If following consultation and further consideration by the Cabinet, the council embarks on a tender route, a detailed proposal for the procurement process would need to be approved by the Cabinet. Given the nature of the service, the council may need to follow a restricted procedure procurement route but adapted to include elements from a competitive dialogue or negotiated approach. The award criteria will reflect a focus on outcomes and the scope for developing provision as well as a focus on working with and involving local partners, especially the voluntary sector. Given the timing of the change, this is an opportunity to commission 0 to 5 year old public health outcomes as part of this process.
- 3.31 This change would involve transfer of existing children's centre staff and potentially other staff whose sole role is working at children's centres (for example administrative staff). Service users, staff, the Local Advisory Boards and partners would need to be consulted so that this could feed into the process of developing a procurement process and a detailed service specification. Consequences for assets and asset management would also need to be considered.
- 3.32 Experience from other local authorities shows that a change process of this kind would be a large scale project and would involve a wide range of council services including Legal, Procurement, HR, Finance, Property, Early Years.
- 3.33 The DfE has laid down strict requirements for formal consultation with service users, and potential users on changes to children's centres. This would take approximately three to four months to fulfil and also includes consultation with partners involved in delivery of services in the centre and local schools and PVI providers in each area. The Local Advisory Boards would be a key part of this consultation.

3.34 Proposed timeline

November 2014	Cabinet report to seek in principle approval to initial consultation process
November 2014	Commence consultation with service users and staff on the options for a new model of service delivery.
November 2014	Complete EIA for staff and for service users.
January 2015	Complete consultation and prepare report of results.
January 2015	Report to Cabinet seeking authority to tender*.
January 2015	Commence formal public and partner consultation
February 2015	Commence tender process to seek a suitable provider*.
April 2015	Complete public and partner consultation and prepare report findings.
May 2015	Complete tender process and Cabinet report on award of contract to commence in September 2015*

*These stages will only be appropriate if, following consultation, tendering appears an appropriate option,

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The total children centres budget for 2014/15 is £2.512m and supports the centres.
- 4.2 The proposal to develop a new model of delivery will need to take into consideration the Council's financial situation and savings that may be achievable if a provider was to deliver the service with reduced resources from the local authority. Following the consultation process, the financial implications of a new model of delivery will be reported to Cabinet in January 2015.

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 Legislation about children's centres is contained in the Childcare Act 2006 and subsequent Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education, which local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions under the Childcare Act 2006.
- 5.2 Under section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006 the council must consult before making any changes to the services provided through existing children's centres.
- 5.3 In undertaking the consultation, the council has a duty to factor in the four underlying obligations that the council is required to follow in undertaking any consultation. These obligations are that:

- a) Consultation must be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage;
- b) The proposer must give sufficient reasons for its proposals to allow consultees to understand them and respond to them properly;
- c) Consulters must give sufficient time for responses to be made and considered; and
- d) Responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision.

5.4 The statutory guidance makes reference to the effect that local authorities should consider involving organisations that have a track record of supporting families and should be aware of the option to set up and transfer children's centres into a public service staff mutual in line with employees' 'Right to Provide' provision.

5.5 Subject to consultation and further consideration by the Cabinet, any outsourcing of the management of the identified children's centres, as stated within the body of the report, would be undertaken in the form of a procurement exercise to procure the management services of a suitable provider. Currently, the Public Contract Regulations 2006 (as amended) would govern the proposed procurement, in addition to officers adhering to the council's own Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

6.0 Diversity implications

6.1 Full EIAs will be carried out for both staff impact and for service user impact as part of this project. Clearly children's centres are established to tackle disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity. Work is carried out to target particular groups, eg Somali community, eastern European families, Traveller families to address disadvantage.

7.0 Staffing implications

7.1 Subject to consultation and further consideration by the Cabinet, any outsourcing of the management of the identified children's centres would have significant staffing and accommodation implications. TUPE will apply to council staff working in the centres and any new provider will be required to meet obligations under the legislation. The procurement process will require that all prospective providers must operate consistently with Brent TUPE processes to protect the rights and benefits of Brent employees.

7.2 Accommodation implications include ensuring that the partner is able to maximise use of the children's centre buildings for the benefit of children and the wider community.

Background Papers

Appendix One: Experience of other local authorities in redesign of children's centres

Contact Officer(s)

Sue Gates

Head of Early Help and Family Support

Tel: 020 8937 2710

Email: sue.gates@brent.gov.uk

Sara Williams

Operational Director Early Help and Education

Tel: 020 8937 3510

Email: sara.williams@brent.gov.uk

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director Children and Young People

Appendix One

Experience of other local authorities in redesign of children's centres

1. Department for Education claw-back

Local authorities are required to notify the department of any changes to any asset funded by the Sure Start grant, including children's centres. The Department for Education reported in August 2013 that 200 changes relating to children's centres had so far been notified to the department and the potential claw-back implications of each of these changes have been considered.

To date no claw-back had been applied to any children's centre as local authorities have been able to show that even after the changes to the children's centres, they continue to deliver predominantly early years services by way of nursery provision or the two year old offer for example, which is a condition of the original grant.

The key lesson to apply here is about ensuring that so long as premises that have been supported through capital grants by the Department for Education continue to deliver predominantly early years services, these will not attract claw-back. The Brent proposals for primarily delivering early education through existing children's centres are consistent with this requirement.

2. Other local authorities

2.1. London Borough of Croydon

In light of national cuts in local authority funding, the council reduced its overall budget for Children's Centres from £4.6M to £3.5M from 2013 with reductions being required during 2012. This reduction, along with the need to refocus funding on deprived families and services towards more vulnerable families, necessitated changes either to the centres (in terms of staffing, management and opening times) and to the services that are delivered.

Wide ranging consultation took place with families in line with statutory requirements about consulting on substantial changes to the way children's centres are configured. This included questionnaires with families with children aged under five who used children's centres and staff and other stakeholders, focus groups with families with children aged under five who used children's centres and staff and other stakeholders and targeted engagement with families with children aged under five who either did not use children's centres or were amongst populations at greater likelihood of not engaging such as deaf parents, young parents and parents with children with complex medical or health needs. In total, more than 2,000 parents offered perspectives as part of the consultation together with more than 250 multidisciplinary staff and managers.

Consequent to this consultation exploring four alternative models and the status quo, the council re-designed children's centres into locality based collaborations with a single strategic manager responsible for three to five centres in five collaborations, driving a more targeted

approach to the most vulnerable families through these settings using evidence-based methodologies, with Family Engagement Partnerships with Health being implemented to deliver an integrated service for 0-5 year-olds.

Croydon reduced the number of children's centres and contracted the management of children's centres to the voluntary sector, albeit avoiding capital claw-back through making centres available for alternative but highly valued children's service provision e.g. a base for children with disabilities and early help services (however continuing to provide some children's centre services through outreach) and having single children's centre teams operate across multiple children's centres.

2.2. London Borough of Westminster

Westminster undertook a substantial reorganisation of their children's centres in 2012/13 moving to a locality model of three 'hub' children's centres with the remaining nine children's centre sites offering 'satellite' services including enhanced two year old places and nursery provision. This approach delivered substantial savings primarily as a consequence of management and administration consolidation. Given that the nine satellite sites offer early years services, together with other Early Help and voluntary sector provision, the reorganisation did not trigger any DfE claw-back requirements. Consultation with Westminster parents and with children's centre and partner agency staff took place.

A mixed model for managing children's centres is operational in Westminster, where two hubs are led by statutory nursery schools working with other providers and the other hub is led by the local authority. Children's centre delivery groups come together within each of the hubs to jointly plan services offered through children's centres and more broadly in partnership with health services, voluntary and community sector agencies, early years providers and schools.

While there is no direct management of children's centres by voluntary sector providers, these providers are extremely engaged in the governance of all three hubs and the local authority wide advisory board, as well as the Children's Trust. Voluntary sector providers are also contracted to deliver wide-ranging services through children's centres and this includes family support work as part of Early Help delivered through children's centres. To build voluntary sector participation and reduce transaction costs associated with small contracts generally, voluntary sector agencies come together now as a consortium to bid for work. As part of the close partnership with voluntary agencies in Westminster, the council has funded accreditation of voluntary sector trainers to deliver parenting programmes and in exchange these trainers deliver parenting programmes without charge, for example

2.3. Hampshire County Council

The county council reduced its overall budget for children's centres from approximately £16m to £11m. This occurred in 2012/13 and resulted in a move from 81 standalone children's centres to 54 children's centres operating in 15 clusters (with three to five children's centres per cluster).

As part of this reorganisation, Hampshire contracted out the management of all children's centres to voluntary organisations with TUPE transfer of staff across to the new organisations. Thirteen clusters are managed by Action for Children and two clusters are managed by 4Children working with several nursery schools (which incorporate on-site children's centres and would neither have been appropriate or straightforward to disentangle from the school's management). Previously, approximately one third of children's centres were managed directly by the local authority, one third by schools and one third by voluntary organisations.

Hampshire has retained, however, a team of three children's centre support officers within the local authority who are responsible for local authority challenge, quality assurance and ensuring that children's centres effectively implement the Performance Management Framework. In discussions with the local authority lead officer, Janet Hoff, she strongly recommends the value of these types of roles for local authorities that undertake substantial partnering with voluntary organisations in the management of children's centres; noting that the revised Ofsted framework for inspection of children's centres has made this even more valuable.

In moving to a cluster model and reducing the number of children's centres, smaller centres continue to be used as part of an early years offer. This includes provision of increased nursery places for two, three and four year olds and for delivery of satellite services for families with young children. This has ensured that no claw-back provisions with DfE have been triggered through the changes to how the sites are being used.

Hampshire is currently implementing its Early Help agenda and children's centres are central to the delivery of this work. The contracts with voluntary sector organisations provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate these organisations actively contributing to the implementation. This includes, for example, staff having caseloads of work with families allocated through Early Help and centres being used for the delivery of Early Help services.

The local authority lead officer, Janet Hoff, identified benefit in outsourcing arrangements that set out a resource envelope to incentivise lower cost proposals than a total budget approach (although being mindful of quality considerations) and the added value of voluntary sector expertise in managing children's centres and early years services and in drawing in additional resources. The latter can present challenge, however, when the organisation/s succeed in attracting resources for their own cluster or clusters and this competes with other borough wide initiatives. This has occurred recently in relation to Parent Champions work where an organisation succeeded in attracting funding for participation in a national programme simultaneously with a borough wide programme for implementing Parent Champions.

2.4. Tameside Council

Tameside have reviewed the children's centre offer within the context of a new early years delivery model and service reform to assist in the provision of a broader integration agenda and community offer. Tameside will move from 17 designated children's centres in the borough to a seven centre option within the borough which will be supplemented by a targeted outreach offer through the Early Intervention Service and the New Early Years Model. At the same time as developing the new model, the service area is required to make savings of £300,000 across 2013/14 to 2014/15.