

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 4th March 2013
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Children and Young People Services

Report Title

RECONFIGURATION OF TRAFFORD CHILDREN CENTRES: POST CONSULTATION FEEDBACK ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This paper reports on the findings of the Trafford Children Centres public consultation and provides options and recommendations for consideration by the Council's Executive.

The report attached (Appendix A) provides a comprehensive analysis of the feedback received from the public consultation held from 22nd October 2012 until 14th January 2013, on the proposal to reconfigure Trafford's 16 Children Centres to develop 6 Children Centre Hubs.

The proposal consulted upon was to reconfigure the 16 Children Centres to become 6 Children Centre Hubs that are aligned with the Area Family Support Teams (AFSTs) and to be located as follows:

- Lostock and Old Trafford (North Area)
- Partington and Urmston (West Area)
- Altrincham and Sale (South Area)

The key rationale for this proposed change to the existing service model is to enable a shift of emphasis towards prevention, early help and early intervention through strengthening multi-agency working to safeguard children and young people so they can achieve the best life outcomes.

The findings from the review of children centres (Dec 2012) has also highlighted the need for services to change, and for services to develop family outreach services working with the integrated AFSTs to support those children and families who are in the greatest need and thus the most vulnerable.

The consultation written responses do not indicate a strong objection to the proposal to refocus resources to deliver services to those children and families who are the most vulnerable and in greatest need;

There was however, significant feedback presented that required further examination of the proposals in respect to the number and location of the 6 proposed Hubs and the development of the Outreach provision.

Recommendations

The Council Executive are requested to approve the following recommendations:

1. To approve the proposal to reconfigure 16 Children Centres to 6 Hubs that align with the North, West and South Area Family Support Teams
2. To approve the revision of the identified Hub for the North Area in the original proposal from Lostock Childrens Centre (Leithwaite) to Stretford Childrens Centre
3. To approve Sale Moor and Lostock (Leithwaite) Children Centres to remain open on a sessional basis as Child and Family Community Outreach (CFCO) bases.
4. To review the workforce to deliver the Hub and family outreach support service model
5. To review the commissioning plan for external services, including renegotiating a reduced contribution to Bookstart
6. To extend the age range to support children and young people aged 0-19years and the opening times of the Hubs.
7. To change the Hub opening times from 8.30am to 4.00pm (weekdays) and the family outreach support service to be provided 8.00am to 6.00pm (weekdays, but evenings and weekends subject to service user needs)

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Mrs Deborah Brownlee, Corporate Director Children, Young People and Families

Extension: 912 4676

Background Papers: None

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Proposal links to the Corporate Priority – Value for Money and Low Council Tax
Financial	The implementation of the proposed reconfiguration of the 16 Children Centres to 6 Hubs would enable savings to be made against the current expenditure on Children Centres. Estimated savings from proposed changes to the service delivery model are approx. £1.71m per annum.
Legal Implications:	The proposal in this report takes account of the requirements in the Childcare Act 2006; Sections 3, 3(2) and 5(A). The proposal recommendations will be compliant with the Capital Guidance for Sure Start Children’s Centres 2006.
Equality/Diversity Implications	A set of full EIA’s have been completed for both service and staff and are attached to this report. The Service EIA has been assessed as a <i>Medium Risk</i> and the Staff EIA as a <i>High Risk</i> . The completion of the EIA’s are in line with the Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty in S49 Equality Act 2010. The outcome of the Service EIA has been taken into account in formulating these proposals
Sustainability	The proposal recommendations will lead to the provision of a

Implications	more targeted service to those children and families who are the most vulnerable and difficult to engage with; the implementation of the proposal and the alignment with the Area Family Support Teams will provide a shift towards early help and early intervention models of support, thus reducing safeguarding risks and reducing generational transfer of risks.
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	The proposal will have the following staffing implications: 24.84 fte posts and 17 casual creche posts will be disestablished. 88 staff (people) are identified as at risk (the end number of people who will receive posts following the implementation of the recommendations is undefined at present as it is subject to the competitive recruitment and selection process) 62.27fte posts will remain in the proposed structure.
Risk Management Implications	Not Applicable
Health and Safety Implications	Not Applicable

1.0 Background

The key influencing factors that informed the development of these proposals are:

- The changing needs of Children and Young People and the social, health and economic challenges faced by families since the inception of Childrens Centres
- The change in service models, with a greater emphasis now on strengthening partnership arrangements and improved multi- agency working to safeguard children and young people so as they can achieve the best life outcomes
- A review of the functions and service delivery model of Children Centres began in August 2012 and the emerging early findings were suggesting the need for Children Centre functions to shift towards an outreach family support model of service with an alignment with the Area Family Support Teams
- Early evidence collected during the Children Centres review clearly suggested that the number of families registered with Children Centres were not necessarily engaging with the Centres; in particular, the groups who were failing to take up the Children Centre offer were from vulnerable groups. The review found the following:
 - Only 3% of fathers accessed a children’s centre
 - Only 8% of teenage mothers accessed a children’s centre
 - Only 15% of lone parents accessed a children’s centre
 - Only 13% of children from BME backgrounds accessed a children’s centre
 - Only 23% of children with disabilities accessed a children’s centre

1.2 The Consultation Process: Full details of the consultation process are provided in Appendix A. Questionnaires and online surveys were widely distributed and made available during the consultation period. Parent Forums, Advisory Board and Extraordinary Meetings were held to enable parents, stakeholders to receive information in respect to the proposal. During the whole consultation process the council consulted with a total of 71 different types of partner agencies /stakeholders and 185 responses were received.

- 1.3 The detailed extensive analysis of the feedback of the consultation showed that there were two distinct categories of responses
- a) the consultation process;
 - b) the proposal to reduce the number of centres and develop a Hub and family support outreach model of service
- 1.4 There was no adverse written feedback from the consultation to suggest that the essence of the original proposal was unsupported, that is to refocus resources to deliver services to those children and families who are the most vulnerable and in greatest need;
- 1.5 Feedback raised concerns in respect to the location of the Hubs, in particular to Stretford and Sale Moor.
- 1.6 The proposal remains to;
- continue to provide the Children Centre core offer to those who choose to engage with the centres,
 - shift the emphasis towards a preventative, early help and early intervention model of service delivery.
 - achieve the unprecedented budget challenges that are facing the public sector at present, by prioritising Children Centre funding towards delivering a service which is targeted at vulnerable groups to ensure those that need support can receive it.
- 1.7 The proposals set out in the paper at Section 7 would have significant financial implications as the recommended reconfiguration of children centres from 16 to 6 Hubs will make a saving of approx £1.71m annually.

Other Options

1. Status Quo: to retain the status quo would not address the issue of engaging those who are in greatest need.
2. Whole Systems Change: to close all Children Centres and reform the workforce to Family Support /Early Intervention Workers, this option would not have provided the core children centre offer of universality
3. Charging for Service: to charge for the service is an option which was identified by a few respondents to the public consultation, this may be an option that could be explored at a later date, but, the early indication is that this option would not be financially viable at this stage to generate enough revenue to deliver both a universal and a targeted service across 16 centres.

Consultation

The council conducted an extensive public consultation on the proposal to reduce 16 Children Centres to 6 Centres and align them with the Area Family Support Teams.

The 12 week public consultation period ran from 22nd October 2012 until 14th January 2013. Full details are included in Appendix A

The following methods were used to consult with, and gather views from the public in respect to the proposals:

- Communication with service users (verbal and written)
- Information letters explaining the proposal were sent to all other stakeholders

- Briefing Sessions and Information sheets were provided to all key partnerships and advisory boards
- Publication of all the relevant consultation documents on the CYPS and Trafford MBC websites: which included a full communication briefing on the proposed changes; 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet; All related policies and a feedback form were also made available on the websites
- Equality Impact Assessment documents were completed to accompany each of the recommendations associated with the consultation on the proposals.

Legal issues

Under s.3(2) of the Childcare Act 2006 the council must make arrangements to secure that early childhood services in their area are provided in an integrated manner which is calculated to (a) facilitate access to those services, and (b) maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. It is clear that the current arrangements for the operation of children's centres are not reaching the most vulnerable parents, prospective parents and children (see paragraph 1.0 above).

Under s.5A of the Act arrangements made under [section 3\(2\)](#) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, include arrangements for sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need. In this context "local need" is the need of parents, prospective parents and young children in the authority's area.

Although the number of centres in Trafford will reduce under the current proposals the way in which the early childhood services will function in future means that the need for such centres should also reduce as more services are delivered in the community.

Under the Equality Act 2010 the council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Those characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This means that in deciding how to organise the operation of children's centres the council must consider how its proposals are likely to affect people with the protected characteristics and take that into account as one of the factors to consider alongside other relevant factors when deciding what decision to make. The Equality Impact Assessment set out at Appendix F will help the Executive to do that.

Reasons for Recommendation

The rationale for a revision of a Hub from Lostock CC to Stretford CC is based on the following:

- The Stretford reach area has significant variances in the level of needs of families across its geographical areas; there are particular pockets of high levels of need. One particular area in Stretford is recorded as being one of the 10% most deprived areas in England
- The Children's centre profile for Stretford shows that 37% of children in this area are living in poverty

- Lostock which was identified as the Hub for the North Areas does not have any areas within it that fall into the 10% most disadvantaged
- Stretford Children's Centre has a purpose built play area which has been developed with the local community and has recently been adapted to provide a facility which can be accessed and provide a positive play area for children and adults with physical disabilities, therefore enabling the centre to meet the requirements of level 3 Inclusion accreditation

The rationale for the retention of Sale Moor as a CFCO is based on the following:

- The building is located within the 20% most deprived areas, therefore, services need to be easily accessible to families living in those communities
- The South Area has the highest number of children and sits within the largest geographical area
- There are a limited number of appropriate and accessible community venues available within the Sale area.
- Sale Moor has very low engagement figures
- Sale Moor is purpose built with excellent outdoor play facilities located on the school site which would enhance the partnership with the Area Family Support Teams
- Sale Moor has a domestic facility for the development of parents 'independent living skills'

Key Decision

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?

**Yes
Yes**

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials).....PH.....

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials).....MJ.....

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)



To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.