

From: Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Families and Social Care

To: Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 5th December 2013

Decision No: 13/00067

Subject: Shaping the Future of Children's Centres in Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Corporate Management Team – 12th November 2013

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member for decision

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: Kent's Children's Centres have been the subject of a public consultation to consider the future shape of the programme. The consultation ended on the 4th October 2013 and a decision is to be made by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services shortly after the Cabinet Committee meeting .

This report provides includes the post consultation report* (Appendix A) and provides details of the proposed decision (Appendix D) which incorporates a number of proposal changes in response to the consultation.

The report also highlights the need for a full staffing restructure to deliver the savings and a number of potential means for delivering additional savings, identified through the consultation process.

* The full post consultation report (>1100 pages) is available

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/childcare-and-pre-school/childrens%20centre%20consultation/Appendix%20A%20Post%20Consultation%20Report.pdf>

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services on the proposed decision (Section 6) .

1. Introduction

1(1) Children's Centres were identified as one of the first service areas to be reviewed as part of a Future Service Options (FSO) Programme.

1(2) The public consultation "Shaping the future of Children's Centres in Kent" ran from 9am on 4 July 2013 until 5pm on 4 October 2013. A single proposal was consulted on, which included;

- Reducing the number of Children's Centres,
- Linking Children's Centres to reduce management and administrative costs,
- Reducing hours at some Children's Centres.

Specifically it proposed;

- Closing 22 Children's Centres (the proposal included either The Village or Folkestone Early Years Centre with services relocated to the remaining building which would become a 'Children's Centre Plus'),
- Closing and merging 2 Children's Centres and relocating them to an existing building in Dover Town Centre,
- Linking 40 full time Centres and 18 part time Centres to 16 Children's Centre Plus (Hubs),
- Reducing the hours to part-time at 13 Centres.

1(3) The aim of developing a future model is that it will;

- Ensure we give earlier support to those children and families who need it most,
- Protect services which improve health, education and social care outcomes,
- Improve co-ordination and access to a range of services for families with children aged 0 – 11 where at least one child in the family is under 5 years old,
- Continue to offer parents and expectant parents a choice about which Centre they use,
- Strengthen the working relationship between Children's Centres, early years settings, schools and health services.

2. Financial Implications

2(1) In line with KCC budget proposals, planned savings are required over the period 2014/15 and 2015/16. The consultation on the future of Children's Centres identified the need to save "at least £1.5m". The current KCC Budget Consultation identifies a £2.0m saving in 2014/15 and a further £0.5m saving in 2015/16.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

3(1) At the heart of **Bold Steps for Kent** is the need to change the way we work, not only to improve our own services, but also to reflect the changing shape of wider public services. Increasingly, those directly responsible for delivering front line services will be empowered to design and commission services that better fit the needs of parents, children and communities. Therefore, we must adopt an approach that is both inclusive and sees prevention and intervention as a continuum, so that it is never deemed too late to positively intervene and prevent the deterioration in an individual child or young person's circumstances.

3(2) **Facing the Challenge**, KCC's organisational transformation approach aims to achieve savings whilst continuing to focus on what is most important to residents. Facing the Challenge requires us to ensure that we deliver services in the most efficient way, maximising outcomes for our residents, and focusing on what matters to them most. Facing the Challenge incorporates a 0-25 Change Portfolio of programmes relating to outcomes for children and young people.

3(3) KCC's Children and Young People's Strategic Plan 2012-2015, **Every Day Matters**, provides the overarching framework within which KCC's children's services work together seamlessly to deliver integrated services and the best possible outcomes for all children and young people in Kent. Kent's Children's Centres and the Futures Service Options Programme support the delivery of the five strategic priorities;

- Safeguarding and protection,
- Early help, prevention and intervention,
- Community ambition, health and wellbeing,
- Learning and achievement,
- Better use of resources.

3(4) The **0-11 Integrated Services Programme** is a key part of the 0-25 Change Portfolio. The programme seeks to establish the best way to support children to have the best start in life. This will focus on ways to integrate the support we deliver to families across education, social care and health so that they work together in a seamless way putting the needs of families at their core. Children's Centres are a fundamental aspect of this programme and will be central to the way that we work with partners to deliver improved outcomes.

Through the 0-11 Programme we will work with partners to define a model for the way that family support, including Children's Centres, will work in the future. The key stages in this development will be;

- A Vision and Blueprint for Integrated Services for 0-11 year olds will be available at the end of January 2014,
- A detailed plan for family support services will be agreed by the end of March 2014.

3(5) In our **Children's Centre Strategy 2013 –16**, we established our Vision and Strategic objectives for the delivery of Children's Centres in Kent. Our vision is

that we “want all children to receive the best start in life and families to reach their full potential”, whilst ensuring that Children’s Centres place families at their centre, are of a high quality and are accessible. The strategy establishes the need to target services to those most in need whilst maintaining availability to all. Those identified as most in need include a range of groups including;

- Families identified by the Local Authority as ‘troubled families’ who have children under 5,
- Families who stay or work in a place for a short time only,
- Children who being cared for by members of their extended family,
- Children who are in the care of the Local Authority,
- Adopted children and adopter families,
- Those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010,
- Fathers, particularly those with any other identified need, for example teenage fathers and those in custody,
- Children of offenders and/or those in custody,
- Children ‘in need’ or with a child protection plan,
- Children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health issues and substance misuse,
- Children from low income backgrounds,
- Lone parents, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers.

4. Shaping the Future of Kent’s Children’s Centre Consultation

Activity

- 4(1) In summary the following consultation activity has taken place;
- Notifying over 40,000 email addresses of the consultation,
 - Directing over 12,605 individuals to the consultation web home page at kent.gov.uk (page viewed 15,403 times),
 - Distributing 12,000 paper versions of the consultation document, 15,000 leaflets and 800 posters,
 - Translating the consultation document ,
 - Visiting Children’s Centres – The Cabinet Member for SCS has visited all Centres that are proposed as closures,
 - Supporting 1,032 events/activities across the County, highlighting the consultation to at least 26,034 attendees (as recorded by DCCMs and CEOs),
 - Facilitating 7 focus groups.

Volumes

- 4(2) This has resulted in the following responses being received and considered;
- 6,008 Consultation Questionnaires, 5,229 (87%) from the public and 779 (13%) from professionals (four responses were received in Russian and these were translated),
 - 97 letter or email responses,
 - Feedback from 7 focus groups,

- 6 petitions with a total of 4,036 signatures. One petition "We call upon Kent County Council to commit to keeping every Sure Start Children's Centre in Kent open and fully funded" has received over 3,000 signatures and will be debated at the Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee on 5th December 2013.

Responses – A high level summary

- 4(3) The vast majority of those who responded to the consultation disagreed to some extent with reducing the number of Children's Centres (87%, 5,098 individuals/professionals). Around 1 in 7 of the professionals who responded supported the proposals (including 23% of the nursery/pre-school staff who responded to the consultation).
- 4(4) Amongst those members of the public who disagreed with reducing the number of Children's Centres, 26% (1,174 individuals) indicated that they would not use Children's Centres at all as a result. Amongst those objecting to the proposal who feel that they will not use Children's Centres at all, travel is clearly a key concern. Other key concerns include a feeling that the loss of a Centre will be the loss of a local community hub and/or a chance to meet people.
- 4(5) 64% (3,625 individuals/professionals) disagreed with reducing hours at some Children's Centres; this is significantly lower than the level of disagreement to reduce the number of Children's Centres.
- 4(6) Amongst those members of the public who disagree with reducing hours at some Children's Centres, 15% (474 individuals) indicated that they would not use Children's Centres as a result.
- 4(7) Opinions are more divided with respect to linking Children's Centres to reduce administrative and management costs. Whilst 47% disagreed (or disagreed strongly) with the proposal, 25% support it. Around two-fifths (39%) of the professionals responding disagreed with the proposals (rising to 53% of the Children's Centre staff who responded to the consultation).
- 4(8) Amongst members of the public objecting to linking Children's Centres, a number are concerned over the proximity of services and their ability to travel. Other key concerns include the potential impact on quality and a perception that the proposals will lead to less help and support being available for parents, that services will be oversubscribed and that staff will be overstretched.
- 4(9) During the consultation period there were nine individuals or organisations who expressed an interest in the future use of the some of the buildings that were identified as a proposed closure.
- 4(10) The Post Consultation Report is available at Appendix A.
- 4(11) Appendix B contains a summary of consultation responses provided by KCC Members.

5. Response to the Consultation: Mitigating Actions

- 5(1) The Consultation identified four main areas of concern;
- The significance of access to transport and the ability to travel to an alternative Centre,
 - The importance of Children's Centres as "hubs" in local communities, giving families opportunities to meet and preventing social isolation,
 - The role Children's Centres play in keeping young children healthy. We have heard about their role in bringing together families with health visitors, midwives and public health activities,
 - The way that Children's Centres have been a lifeline for families in distress, enabling many to turn to someone for intensive help and support to work through problems which have seemed insurmountable.
- 5(2) This feedback has been used to re-evaluate each of the original proposals by;
- 1) Reconsidering need (population based) and re-analysing usage patterns,
 - 2) Identifying the impact on users (as identified by consultation respondents) and particularly sole users,
 - 3) Assessing suitable alternative venues within one mile of a proposed closure to enable services to continue to be delivered within the community,
 - 4) Identifying property implications including potential future usage of accommodation and the likelihood of Department for Education clawback of capital monies (see 5(16) below).
- 5(3) This is a very simplistic explanation of a complex and thorough analysis that takes account of a much wider range of evidence, including more qualitative sources.
- 5(4) In addition, all Equality Impact Assessments initial screenings have been reviewed and four full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken.

1. DATA: Reconsidering need (population based) and re-analysing usage patterns

- 5(5) Selection criteria were used to identify the Children's Centres proposed for closure or reduced hours. These criteria and supporting hypothesis-led analysis are available at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres.
- 5(6) Through the consultation a number of respondents questioned the reliability of some data used to support the selection criteria. This specifically related to the definition of 'need' and the age of the usage data (1 October 2011 to 31 September 2012).
- 5(7) In response the need data used to establish consultation proposals has been updated and reanalysed for the period 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013. Needs have been assessed based on the population with 0-11 year olds (NOT users of a Centre) living within the calculated 'actual/natural' catchment.

2. IMPACT: Impact on users (as identified by consultation respondents)

- 5(8) Considerations of the impact on users (and particularly sole users), as identified by the consultation responses, has been key in the drafting of the recommendations. These recommendations seek to mitigate the disproportionate impact on families.
- 5(9) All Centres proposed for closure or reduced hours have been assessed by the magnitude of their impact on sole users. This is the number of sole users of each of these Centres responding to the consultation saying that they 'will no longer use Children's Centres'.

3. VENUES: Assessing suitable alternative venues

- 5(10) Children's Centres provide services that are accessible to all, are able to prevent problems and to intervene early when required. For this reason, the consultation proposals were focused on ensuring that savings are delivered by reducing the costs associated with maintaining and staffing buildings, rather than stopping the services that are delivered within them.
- 5(11) A commitment has been made that the closure of a building will not mean that the valued services provided in the building will cease. Individual services will, as part of the usual service planning cycle, be assessed and maintained where there is a community need for them.
- 5(12) An assessment of suitable alternative venues has been undertaken to ensure that there are venues within communities from which activities can continue to take place.

4. PROPERTY: Identifying property implications

- 5(13) The property implications and restrictions for Children's Centre sites that are proposed for closure have been considered and an options appraisal for alternative use for each of these sites has been undertaken. This includes any temporary, ongoing and transitional costs that are associated with these options.
- 5(14) For any centre that is proposed to have a part time use or be an outreach centre we will endeavour, wherever possible, to see if other Early Years services can make use of the building to ensure the effective and efficient use of assets is achieved at all times.
- 5(15) Capital Clawback - any proposed closures of Children's Centre buildings which were funded by Department for Education Sure Start Grant funding could invoke a capital clawback charge proportionate to the level of the Department's contribution. Work is underway with the Department for Education to manage the risk of capital clawback through accommodation solutions. Further guidance is available at:
<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/capital%20guidance.pdf>

Equality Impact Assessments

- 5(16) One Countywide and 37 individual Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) were undertaken. All 38 EqIAs were available on the consultation website throughout the consultation period at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres
- 5(17) Following the consultation;
- A full EqIA has been undertaken on the Countywide proposal,
 - Full EqIAs have been undertaken on the closure of New Romney Children's Centre, North Deal Primrose Children's Centre and the closure and merger of The Buttercup and The Daisy Children's Centres with relocation to an existing community facility in Dover Town Centre as these Centres were screened as 'high impact',
 - The remaining 34 Equality Impact Assessments (screened as low and medium impact) have been reviewed and updated. This included updating action plans to mitigate any impact related to protected characteristics,
 - An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on a new proposal for The Daisy and The Buttercup.
- 5(18) The Countywide full EqIA identified a potential adverse impact on teenage mothers (age), teenage parents (age), lone parents (marriage and civil partnerships), expectant parents (pregnancy and maternity) and fathers (gender). Across all characteristics there are concerns about continued accessibility of services, the costs and difficulties of travelling to alternative locations and the reduction in opening hours and possible unsuitable hours. The assessment recommends that a closure should not go ahead unless suitable alternative venues are found for service delivery.
- 5(19) An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has also been undertaken on a proposal to close The Daisy Children's Centre and merge it with The Buttercup Children's Centre (see Section 6). This initial screening has identified a potential medium impact on the following characteristics; Age (children under 5 and teenage parents), Gender (male service users), Race (White British service users), Pregnancy and Maternity (pregnant women and parents with babies) and Marriage and Civil Partnerships (lone parents). A copy of the screening is available at Appendix C.
- 5(20) The full EqIAs and updated screenings are available in the Post Consultation Report at Appendix A.

6. Proposed decision

6(1) Based on the re-evaluation of each of the original proposals, as described in Section 5 it is recommended that;

Recommendation	Rationale	Children's Centres
Five Centres are retained in their current form and continue to be Ofsted designated Children's Centres	Based on the largest numbers of sole users impacted by the proposal and the lack of suitable alternative venues	St. Marys New Romney Folkestone Early Years Woodgrove
	Based on highest need (by volume) and the highest sole usage (by volume)	Temple Hill
Six Children's Centre buildings are retained to offer access to early childhood services ¹ (with <u>at least</u> part-time hours)	Based on the number of sole users impacted by the proposals and the lack of suitable alternative venues	Maypole The Village Swalecliffe Briary
	Based on the number of sole users impacted by the proposals and purpose 'built' accommodation	Apple Tree Marden
One Centre is retained as a Part Time Centre	Based on the proportion of sole users (increase of 8%) and purpose 'built' accommodation	Tina Rintoul
One additional hub is created in the Canterbury Clinical Commissioning Group area	Based on the suggested retention of St. Mary's, Briary, Swalecliffe, Apple Tree and Tina Rintoul	Joy Lane
An alternative Centre becomes the hub in Gravesham and Maidstone	Based on the accommodation space and facilities available	Riverside (instead of Little Pebbles), Meadows (instead of Sunshine).
Merge The Daisy with The Buttercup. Retain Children's Centre services	Based on lack of suitable alternative accommodation in Dover Town Centre	The Buttercup The Daisy

¹ 12 Children's Centres are merged into 6 but all 12 Children's Centre buildings are retained to continue to offer access to early childhood services on behalf of a Children's Centre - linked site/ outreach centre.

in Tower Hamlets (The Daisy). (New EqlA available at Appendix C – impact assessed a medium.)		
Hub and link arrangements are changed so catchments are co-terminus with Clinical Commissioning Group and district boundaries in most cases	Based on feedback from key partners	Little Foxes, South Tonbridge and Borough Green are linked to Woodlands, Greenlands at Darenth is linked to Brent, Westborough is linked to Sunshine.

6(2) In line with the recommendations above, the impact on the overall Children's Centre Programme would be;

Consultation Proposal	Proposed Decision
Closing 22 Children's Centres (including either Folkestone Early Years or the Village)	Close 12 Children's Centres BUT retain services within the local community, Retain 4 Centres in current form (plus Folkestone Early Years), Retain 6 Children's Centre buildings to offer access to early childhood services (with at least part-time hours), Retain 1 Centre as part time.
Closing and merging 2 Children's Centres and relocating them to an existing building in Dover Town Centre	Close The Daisy and merge with The Buttercup. Retain Children's Centre services in Tower Hamlets (The Daisy).
Reducing the hours to part-time at 13 Centres	Reducing the hours to part-time at 12 Centres (retaining Temple Hill as full time). All KCC services to be delivered within part time hours, some health services may be delivered outside of these hours.
Linking 16 hubs with 40 full time Centres and 18 part time Centres	Linking 17 hubs with 43 full time Centres, 18 part time Centre and 7 'outreach centres/ linked sites'.

6(3) This will have the following impact on services;

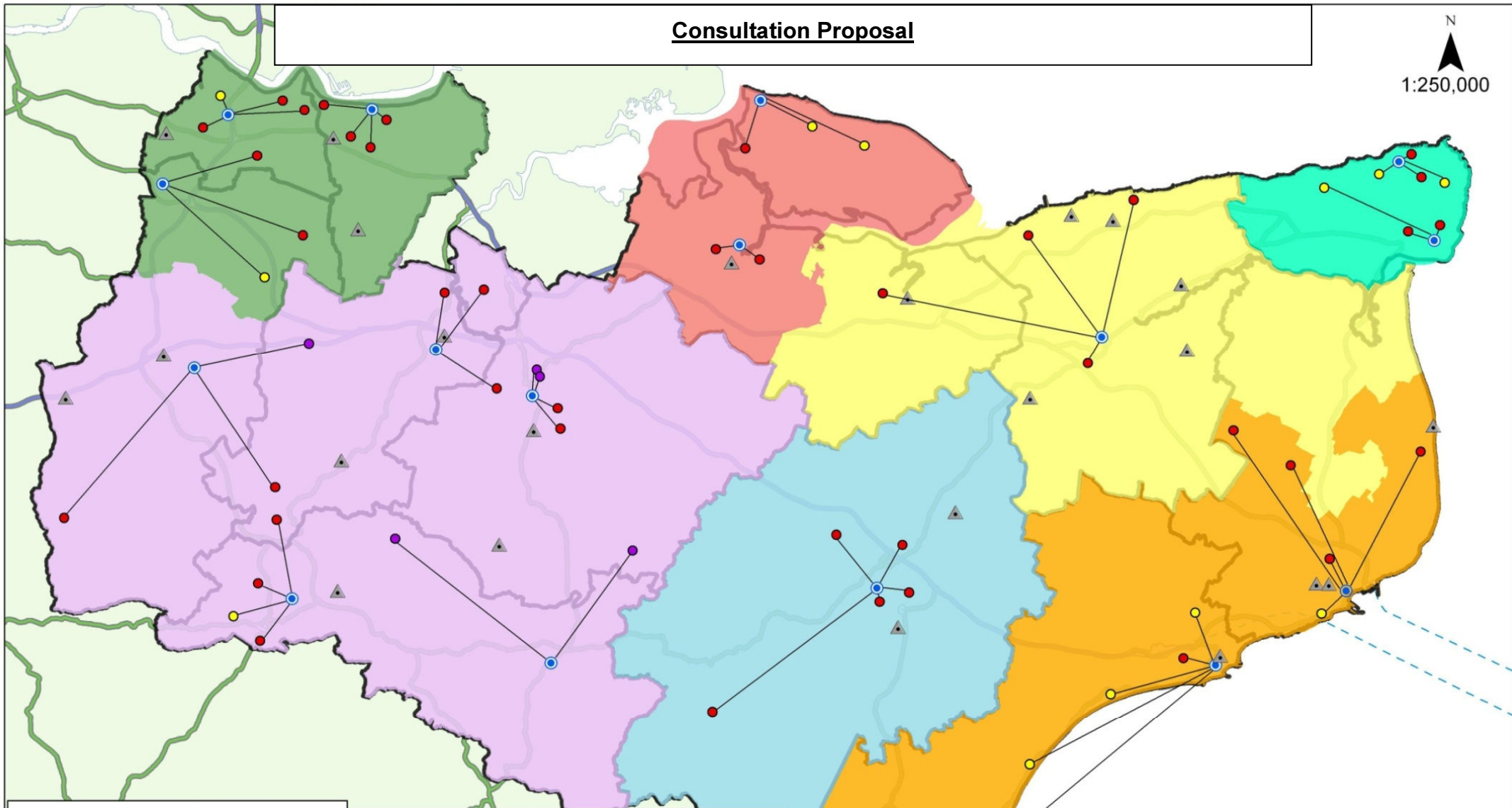
- 39 (KCC) activities and 12 (health) services which are currently delivered at Children's Centres that are recommended for closure will relocate to suitable alternative venues. This includes services currently delivered at; Cherry Blossom, Squirrel Lodge, Little Bees, Daisy Chains, Little Painters, Loose, Dunton Green, Merry-Go-Round, Hadlow, Larkfield, Pembury and Primrose Children's Centres,
- 119 (KCC) activities and 50 (health) services which are currently delivered in Children's Centre buildings (that were proposed for closure) will be retained within the existing Children's Centre accommodation. This includes services currently delivered at; The Village, Marden, Apple Tree, Briary, Woodgrove Swalecliffe and Maypole Children's Centres,

- It is suggested that all outreach activities remain unaffected including service delivery at Merry-Go-Round (Westerham) and Daisy Chains (Meopham). In addition we are exploring the feasibility of retaining some Children's Centre accommodation at Loose, Dunton Green and Hadlow to support the delivery of outreach services.

6(4) The proposed record of decision is available at Appendix D.

Consultation Proposal

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1:250,000

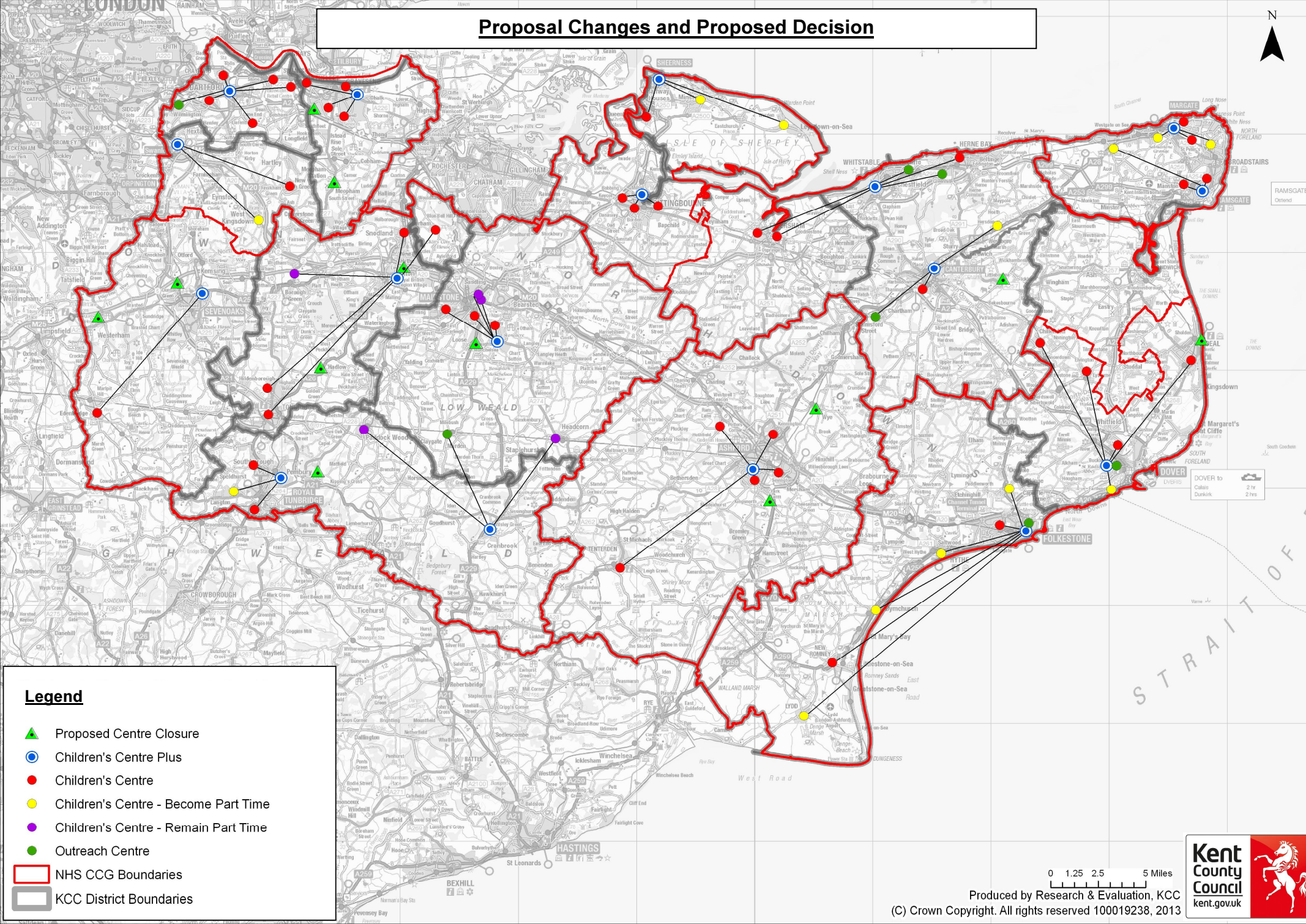


Legend

▲ Centre Reduction	■ NHS Ashford CCG
● Hub	■ NHS Canterbury and Coastal CCG
● Link Centre	■ NHS Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley CCG
● Link Centre - Become Part Time	■ NHS South Kent Coast CCG
● Link Centre - Remain Part Time	■ NHS Swale CCG
□ KCC District Boundaries	■ NHS Thanet CCG
	■ NHS West Kent CCG



Proposal Changes and Proposed Decision



- Legend**
- Proposed Centre Closure
 - Children's Centre Plus
 - Children's Centre
 - Children's Centre - Become Part Time
 - Children's Centre - Remain Part Time
 - Outreach Centre
 - NHS CCG Boundaries
 - KCC District Boundaries

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

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7. Financial Implications of Proposal Decision

- 7(1) The levels of savings required are subject to confirmation following the KCC budget consultation. The current KCC budget consultation identifies a £2.0m saving in 2014/15 and a further £0.5m saving in 2015/16.
- 7(2) This level of savings can be achieved with the proposed decision if;
- a. A full staffing restructure is also undertaken. The consultation document identified that savings would be derived from a reduction in management, administration and accommodation costs. Any proposed changes to staffing structures cannot be drafted for consultation with staff until the decision on the future shape of Kent's Children's Centres has been made.
 - b. A number of potential means for delivering additional savings, identified through the consultation process are explored further, including;
 - A market, engagement and service review,
 - Implementing a contributions scheme for some services,
 - Increasing rental income particularly at part time Centres,
 - The formal co-location of health visitors leading to a new income stream,
 - More effective joint commissioning,
 - Increased efficiencies by working in conjunction with ICT to deliver the countywide print review and Unified Communications project.

8 Communication: Post Decision

- 8(1) Following the decision on the future shape of Children's Centres, the decision will be communicated as widely as possible. Specific leaflets will be produced for each network of Children's Centres, which clearly show the services which will be delivered from April 2014, and the venue from which they will be delivered. The post consultation report at Appendix A will also be updated and published at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres.

9 Conclusions

- 9(1) Feedback from the public consultation has been used to re-evaluate each of the original proposals and develop a number of recommendations. The post consultation report is at Appendix A.
- 9(2) The proposed decision will deliver the levels of savings identified in the current KCC Budget Consultation if a full staffing restructure is undertaken.
- 9(3) A number of potential means for delivering additional savings were also identified through the consultation process and these will be explored further.

10 Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services on the proposed decision (Section 6).

11 Background Documents

Full details of the consultation proposals are provided online at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres. This also includes supporting criteria by Centre, Equality Impact Assessments, the hypothesis-led supporting analysis, analysis of the district engagement workshops held in February 2013 and Frequently Asked Questions.

Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance (April 2013)

<http://www.clusterweb.org.uk/userfiles/CHC/file/CC%20Staff%20Documents/Home%20Page/childrens%20centre%20stat%20guidance%20april%202013.pdf>

Ofsted Framework for Children's Centre Inspections (April 2013)

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-childrens-centre-inspection-april-2013>

Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant and Aiming High For Disabled Children Grant Capital Guidance (DfE capital 'clawback')

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/capital%20guidance.pdf>

Report to Social Care and Public Health Committee on 12th June 2013

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=40679>

Report to Social Care and Public Health Committee on 4th October 2013

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s42748/C2%20-%20Shaping%20the%20Future%20of%20Childrens%20Centres%20in%20Kent%20V2.pdf>

12 Contact details

Report Author:

- Karen Mills, Commissioning Manager (Children's Centres)
- 01622 694531
- Karen.mills@kent.gov.uk

Director:

- Mark Lobban, Director of Strategic Commissioning
- 01622 694934
- Mark.lobban@kent.gov.uk

Appendix A – Post Consultation Report

Appendix B - A summary of consultation responses provided by KCC Members.

Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment initial screening on a revised proposal to close The Daisy Children's Centre and merge with The Buttercup Children's Centre

Appendix D – Proposed Record of Decision