

From: Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director for Families and Social Care

To: Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 4th October 2013

Decision No: For Information

Subject: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN KENT CONSULTATION

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Committee with the opportunity to comment on the 'Shaping the Children's Centres in Kent' Consultation.

This includes outlining the proposals, providing a summary of consultation responses to date and updating members on the timetable for decision following consultation.

Recommendation(s): The Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to;

(a) Comment on the proposal.

(b) Note the proposed timetable for member decision.

1. Introduction

1(1) The nationally prescribed core purpose of a Children's Centre is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers through a combination of the following universal and targeted services;

Universal Services:

- High quality, inclusive, early learning and childcare
- Information and activities for families
- Adult learning and employment support
- Integrated child and family health services

Targeted Services:

- Parenting and Family Support
- Targeted evidence-based early intervention programmes
- Links with Specialist Services

1(2) The Children's Centre Future Service Programme aims to;

- Deliver better, earlier support to those children and families who need it
- Continue to provide Children's Centre services to improve health, education and social care outcomes
- Strengthen the working relationship between Children's Centres, early years settings, schools and health services
- Meet budget savings (of at least £1.5 million by 1 April 2014) and address areas that could be improved further

2. Financial Implications

2(1) The Children's Centre Future Service Programme is required to meet efficiency savings of at least £1.5 million in the 2014/15 financial year.

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) 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 strategic priorities as set out in Every Day Matters;

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

- 3(3) Kent's Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy (August 2012) sets out that Children's Centres need to strengthen their working relationship with early years settings and schools in order to improve the quality of early year's education, improve readiness to learn and ensure young children and their families in need of early support can access this at the earliest point.
- 3(4) Kent Integrated Adolescent Support Service provides the model for early intervention and prevention services for young people aged 11-19. The new service delivery model aligns professionals and integrates activity through a Framework of Integrated Adolescent Support so that young people access the right services, at the right time, in the right place. Children's Centres across Kent are actively supporting this service to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve outcomes for teenage parents and are developing a model of integration 0-11 to provide transition into this service.
- 3(5) Facing the Challenge: Whole Council Transformation - The organisation will position itself to meet the anticipated financial challenges over the medium-long term. It outlines a future vision for the council, an outline service delivery model to support that vision, and a whole-council transformation approach that will begin the journey to transition the authority towards a new operating model. This will ensure that KCC can continue to deliver against its strategic priorities within a sustainable budget.
- 3(6) Action on Health Visiting Programme (designed to define and implement an improved health visiting service and an expanded health visiting workforce to deliver improved health and social outcomes for children), sets out its intention to deliver improved outcomes through delivery of a public health and Healthy Child Programme aligned service for children aged 0-5 years and their families.

4. 'Shaping the future of Children's Centres in Kent' Consultation

- 4(1) The Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee received a paper on the 12th June 2013 which outlined the aims of the Future Service Options Programme and the proposed timetable which included the 'Shaping the Future of Children's Centres in Kent' consultation.
- 4(2) The consultation on "Shaping the future of Children's Centres in Kent" was launched at 9am on Thursday 4th July. The consultation will run for approximately 3 months, closing at 5pm on Friday 4th October.
- 4(3) One proposal is being consulted on which includes;
- Reducing the number of Children's Centres

- Linking Children's Centres to reduce management and administrative costs
 - Reducing hours at some Children's Centres
- 4(4) We are proposing to;
- Close 22 Children's Centres (the proposal includes either The Village or Folkestone Early Years Centre with services relocated to the remaining building which will become a 'Children's Centre Plus')
 - Close and merge 2 Children's Centres and relocate them to an existing building in Dover Town Centre.
 - Reduce the hours to part-time at 13 Centres.
- 4(5) Centres have been identified for potential closure or a reduction in hours based on robust analysis which has been undertaken in conjunction with input from local managers. Those centres proposed for closure will be ones which serve areas that require less of our support, currently deliver limited services from the building, already act as a signposting facility for services delivered elsewhere, or those where most of the families using them also use other Children's Centres nearby which will remain open. KCC will continue to support Centres in communities of high need and those which are well used by families.
- 4(6) Full details of the proposals are provided in the consultation document at Appendix 1. These are also available online at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres where there is also a link to the online consultation questionnaire, frequently asked questions, legal requirements, data relating to the proposal, equality impact assessments, summary selection criteria and maps.
- 4(7) Emails advertising the consultation have been sent to all key stakeholders including those registered with a Children's Centre on eStart, amounting to over 40,000 emails, of which 35,000 are users.
- 4(8) Copies of the consultation document, summary leaflets and posters are available in all Children's Centres. Leaflets have also been distributed to libraries within 800m of an affected Children's Centre. A poster to raise the profile of the consultation has been distributed to all libraries, gateways, early years settings and primary schools that share a site with a Children's Centre.
- 4(9) District Children's Centre Managers (DCCM's) and Community Engagement Officers are facilitating the consultation locally, including raising awareness of the consultation with service users and professionals, engaging with specific target groups, distributing materials where appropriate and ensuring that

parents, carers and members of the public are able to complete the questionnaire in a suitable format.

- 4(10) Throughout July and August 2013 District Children's Centre Managers (DCCM's) and Community Engagement Officers had attended or supported a large number of events to facilitate the consultation locally. This activity will continue throughout September 2013 to continue to engage the public, particularly Ofsted target groups.
- 4(11) 21 Member led visits to affected Children's Centres have also been undertaken or are planned to be undertaken during the consultation period.
- 4(12) Appendix 2 provides a Frequently Asked Questions document which is also available at www.kent.gov.uk/childrenscentres. This has been updated throughout the consultation.

5. Consultation Responses to date

- 5(1) On the 27th August 2013, 8 weeks into the 13 week consultation, a total of 3641 questionnaires had been completed. 1883 questionnaires had been completed in paper format and 1758 had been completed online.
- 5(2) Approximately 21% of responses were from professionals and 79% from the public. Of the public responses approximately 91% were from Children's Centre users.
- 5(3) With the exception of parents in armed forces, a response had been made from all Ofsted target groups including, Lone Parents, Fathers, Teenage Parents, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, Parents with English as an Additional Language and parents of children from low income backgrounds.
- 5(4) 7 petitions have been set up as a result of the consultation. These petitions relate to both specific proposals and the countywide proposal in general. 2 of these proposals are hosted at kent.gov.uk. KCC has no obligation to recognise any petitions which are not hosted at this website and individuals who have established petitions elsewhere have been advised of this.
- 5(5) In addition, 44 written responses have been sent in reply to letters relating to the consultation.

6. Timetable

6(1) Cabinet Committee is asked to note the timetable below;

Activity	Date
Initial discussion at Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee	12 th June 2013
Preparation of proposals for formal consultation	June/July 2013
Formal public consultation and opportunity for engagement (12 weeks)	9am on 4 th July to 5pm on 4 th October 2013
Opportunity for Public Health and Social Care Cabinet Committee to discuss and to contribute its views to the consultation	4 th October 2013
Analysis of consultation responses and preparation of recommendations for decisions	October 2013
Report to Public Health and Social Care Cabinet Committee for discussion prior to the decision being taken	5 th December 2013
Decision taken	December 2013
Implementation	1 st April 2014

7. Conclusions

7(1) Children's Centres are required to deliver efficiency savings of £1.5 million in 2014/15. A proposal identifying how this saving could be made is currently the subject of a public consultation, entitled 'shaping the future of Children's Centres in Kent'.

8. Recommendation(s)

The Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to;

- (a) Comment on the proposal
- (b) Note the proposed timetable for member decision

9. Background Documents

Full details of the 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>

10. Contact details

Name of Author *Karen Mills*
Job Title of Author *Commissioning Manager*
Telephone Number 01622 694531
E-mail karen.mills@kent.gov.uk

Name of Author *Amy Noake*
Job Title of Author *Commissioning Officer*
Telephone Number 01622 694613
E-mail amy.noake@kent.gov.uk