

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 8 November 2018

Report of the Head of Service - Children and Family Wellbeing Service

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
(All Divisions);

Children and Family Wellbeing Service: Responses to Consultation and Final Proposals

(Appendices 'A' - 'D' refer)

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Executive Summary

At its meeting on 8 February 2018, Full Council approved proposals to reduce the number of settings through which the Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivers its service offer subject to consultation, with the outcome to the consultation to be presented to Cabinet for final approval. This report presents the outcome of the consultation.

Careful consideration has been given to each setting including the local level of need for the service: its location; accessibility; suitability to deliver services; type and scale of service delivery; running costs; condition; time taken to travel there; what other services are provided there; and wider community impact.

Having taken all of these factors into account, and completing an appraisal exercise, a list of the premises has been developed where it is proposed to no longer deliver services from.

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service currently operates from 76 premises. The initial proposal was to:

- retain delivery at 57 settings
- withdraw delivery at 19 settings

A range of accommodation, including within school based settings, will become vacant and consideration will be given to alternate use by county council services. Where this is not possible or appropriate the premises will either be considered for disposal or be transferred across to schools along with the associated premises costs.

Financial Management (Development and School) will be assessing the financial impact on affected schools and working with and supporting them to ensure that they address any financial issues resulting from withdrawal of these services.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Note the findings of the consultation as set out in the Consultation report at Appendix 'A'.
- (ii) Approve that the Children and Family Wellbeing Service implements the proposals for 76 buildings.
 - 50 will continue to provide Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery (Appendix 'B' refers) as proposed in the consultation.
 - 12 will no longer provide Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery, (Appendix 'B' refers) as proposed in the consultation.
 - 14 buildings listed in Appendix 'B', will be subject to further consideration taking into account the cost of building adaptations required to accommodate future Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery and further budget option decisions.
- (iii) Note that further proposals on the remaining 14 buildings will be presented to Cabinet once the additional consideration has been given.

Background and Advice

The statutory remit for the Children and Family Wellbeing Service is set out in two key areas of legislation as follows:

(a) Children's Centres (0-11 years' Service Offer)

With respect to Children's Centres the county council has a duty under the Childcare Act 2006, supplemented by statutory guidance, to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that there is sufficient provision of Children's Centres to meet the needs of young children and parents living in the area, particularly those in greatest need of support.

(b) The Young People's Service (12 - 19 years' Service Offer)

Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that a local education authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their wellbeing, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

There are no clearly defined national standards for what the local authority should deem as 'sufficient' in the context of either of the above statutory guidance. It is therefore up to each local authority to determine for itself what it considers effective in discharging its sufficiency duty in the context of local needs and in order to provide a service that meets the needs of children, young people and their families.

It has been identified that there were opportunities for the Children and Family Wellbeing Service to deliver its objectives more efficiently, through better use of buildings and staff resources. To implement these efficiencies, Full Council agreed as part of the 2018/19 budget to apply a permanent reduction of £1.250m to the Children and Family Wellbeing budget. This reduction was made up of a reduction of £0.750m in non-staffing costs, and £0.500m in staffing resources. These reductions impact on the number of settings through which the Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivers its service offer. In order to achieve this a consultation took place in August 2018 to identify the settings which the service could best utilise and make the most effective use of the remaining resources.

Options were considered as to how the service could provide support direct to people in their home settings and deliver in community settings where possible. This would enable Children and Family Wellbeing to become more people focused rather than building based by reducing the number of buildings from which the service is based and works from.

Consultation

The consultation process commenced on 6 June 2018 for an 8 week period ending on 3 August 2018, comprising on-line and hard copy questionnaires, detailing the proposals on a district by district basis.

Paper questionnaires were made available in the buildings where Children and Family Wellbeing services are delivered. An electronic version of the consultation questionnaire was available online at www.lancashire.gov.uk and was publicised through the "Have Your Say" webpage.

In addition, Creative Exchange were commissioned to facilitate consultation workshops with service users during July 2018. The findings of these are detailed in Appendix 'C'.

The consultation proposals, setting out the methodology that was applied and details of the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, are included in Appendix 'A'.

In total, 729 completed questionnaires were returned (271 paper questionnaire responses and 458 online questionnaire responses). Full details and key findings from the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 'A'.

It was evident when analysing the consultation responses that some of the comments received from individuals and organisations who participated in the consultation were based on a misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation of the detail and implications of the proposals within the consultation. Some key issues are set out below for clarification:

1. Closure of the 19 buildings where we proposed to cease delivering the Children and Family Wellbeing Service.
2. Buildings where the Children and Family Wellbeing Service is the sole occupier will be considered for alternative county council service occupancy or may be considered for disposal. Any other services currently delivered from these buildings will not be unduly affected by the CFW proposals to cease their delivery from these settings.
3. Suggestions for increasing and promoting usage of the 19 buildings where we proposed to cease delivering the Children and Family Wellbeing Service.
 - Buildings where the Children and Family Wellbeing Service is the sole occupier will be considered for alternative county council service occupancy or may be considered for disposal or surrendering of the property interest. Any other services delivered in these buildings will not be unduly affected by our proposals.
4. Suggestions for promoting the Children and Family Wellbeing Service more widely in order to increase usage, the implication being that this would mean they could still deliver services from the 19 buildings proposed to cease delivering a service.
 - The service targets and prioritises children, young people, parents and families most in need, particularly where it thinks that early help will make the biggest difference, so wider promotion to the public would not be appropriate. The implementation of the budget decision has led to a significant reduction in staffing resources, and therefore the service does not have sufficient staff numbers to retain delivery at the 19 buildings where it is proposed that service delivery will no longer continue.
5. Potential impact upon Special Educational Needs and Disabilities activities for children and young people.
 - The proposal will not affect the current Special Education Needs and Disabilities offer delivered by the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, except for at Ashton Young People's Centre where it is proposed to transfer the existing group to Riverbank Children's Centre. 1-1 family support for families with children and young people identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities normally takes place in the family home. The proposal would also not affect the linked Special Educational Needs and Disabilities offer of Free Early Education entitlement to children aged 2 - 4 which some educational establishments provide.

Consultation common feedback themes

1. In some cases respondents did not appear to acknowledge the outreach work the service offers in places like homes, at school or a local café as alternate

venues, which would mitigate concerns about travelling and barriers to using alternate settings.

2. A number of respondents referred to the centres being used for meetings with health professionals; this is part of the universal offer for the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme and these services will continue in nearby centres, schools and communities.
3. Over half of the respondents said that in the last 12 months they had used a building or buildings that we are proposing to keep delivering Children and Family Wellbeing Services from.
4. About one in seven respondents (14%) said that if the proposal happened they would go to a building to use a Children and Family Wellbeing Service less often than they do now and about a fifth of respondents (22%) said that they would not go at all.
5. The service will work with partners and communities to "reach" children, young people and their families who have previously used Centres where it is proposed to no longer deliver the Children and Family Wellbeing Service. They will ensure that families are aware of where services can still be accessed in each District.

Outcomes and revised proposals

The initial proposals were to continue with service delivery from 57 sites and withdraw delivery from 19 sites. Following the detailed analysis and appraisal work undertaken by the service, and having fully taken into account the responses to the consultation, revised proposals are now presented. These proposals are to:

- Confirm that Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery will continue from 50 existing buildings.
- Approve that 12 buildings will no longer provide Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery.
- Note that 14 buildings, will be subject to further consideration, taking into account the cost of building adaptations required to accommodate future Children and Family Wellbeing Service delivery and further budget option decisions.

The full list of which buildings are to continue to provide the service, which will no longer provide the service and which are subject to further consideration is provided at Appendix 'B'.

It is proposed to implement these changes in a phased approach to be completed between November 2018 and April 2019.

Service Operation in the Future

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service will continue to deliver services in different ways by making the best use of the remaining capacity. The Children and Family Wellbeing Service will continue to make best use of its available resources, working with partners in order to deliver the best possible service to our children and young people aged 0-19 (25 with Special Education Needs and Disabilities) and their

families. This will include targeting the service at those who have been assessed and have needs identified at Level 2 of Lancashire's Continuum of Need thresholds.

The service will continue to work in partnership with Health partners, district councils, the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector, Police, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and Children's Social Care to offer a joined up seamless service, to make sure that positive outcomes for children, young people and families continue to be achieved. This will continue to be particularly focussed within deprived neighbourhoods, outlying areas, rural communities and anti-social behaviour hotspots.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial Implications

The £1.250m agreed saving by Full Council in February 2018 was removed from the service budget from April 2018. If Cabinet does not agree these proposals, this will result in £1.250m needing to be re-invested in the service in order to maintain service delivery at the current scale and this will need to be built into the medium term financial strategy from 2019/20. This would create a further pressure and increase the forecast financial gap.

These proposals will have an impact on service delivery from a wide range of settings, including those currently within schools. This will have a financial impact upon the maintained nursery and primary schools listed in Appendix 'B' and will need to be managed. Consideration will need to be given to alternate use by other county council services. Where this is not possible or appropriate the premises will either be considered for disposal or be transferred across to schools along with the associated premises costs. Schools' Finance is working with affected schools to ensure that any financial impact is managed as far as possible.

In order to accommodate the change in service delivery, adaptations will be required in a small number of buildings as detailed in Appendix 'B'. When detailed estimates of these works are available separate Cabinet approval will be sought and funded from the previously approved property review programme.

Possible clawback

A number of buildings identified within this report as no longer being required to deliver the Children and Family Wellbeing pattern of service delivery, are former registered children's centres. If this proposal is approved by Cabinet, there is a potential risk of financial claw back in respect of government funding used to develop these premises when they were first established. The maximum risk of clawback for these premises detailed in Appendix 'B' where it is recommended services are no longer delivered is estimated at £2.5m (2018/19), being calculated on a sliding scale over a period of 25 years. It should be noted that we have not been able to identify any other Local Authority which has had to pay back clawback as a result of reducing their number of designated children centres.

The basis of the clawback provisions is that where local authorities dispose of or change the use of buildings funded wholly or partly through capital grants then they must be re-paid. However, if the Department for Education is satisfied that the funding for the asset will continue to be used for purposes consistent with the grant, then repayment may be deferred.

However, in the event that clawback does arise, the decision to close former children's centres would need to be considered against the ongoing revenue savings in respect of the Children and Family Wellbeing Service referred to above and may need to be funded from the Transitional Reserve.

Risk management

These proposals to cease delivery at a number of buildings involve a potential risk of claw back of Government funding as detailed above.

Equality Implications

The county council is under an obligation to consider each strategic proposal in terms of possible impact upon certain groups (defined in the Equality Act 2010 by reference to protected characteristics).

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is detailed in Appendix 'D'.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		