

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
6 JANUARY 2014	Public Report

Report of the Director for Communities

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NEW VISION FOR EARLY YEARS SERVICES INCLUDING CHILDREN’S CENTRES IN PETERBOROUGH

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Scrutiny Committee of the outcome so far of the consultation around the proposed changes to the way early years services are run in Peterborough including Children’s Centres.

The report will update Scrutiny on the following:

- The consultation process
- Emerging issues and themes from parents and the community
- Alternative proposals and suggestion from parents and the community

The report also seeks the views of scrutiny members as part of the ongoing consultation process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 For Scrutiny Committee to endorse the process of consultation to date and to be aware of the issues and themes currently emerging from the consultation process. For the committee to recognise that formal consultation does not end until 8th January 2014 and that this report provides information gathered from the consultation mid-way through the process.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report relates to the Supporting Vulnerable People priority in the Single Delivery Plan.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Cabinet gave approval for consultation to begin on the future delivery of early years services in Peterborough including Children’s Centres on 18 November 2013. Formal public consultation began on 26 November 2013.

The consultation document has been sent to all interested parties and a questionnaire has been devised to gather responses. Both consultation document and questionnaire appear on a dedicated link on the council’s website. To date:

- 18 questionnaires have been returned by post
- 77 responses have been completed on line
- 23 responses have been sent by email

All relevant statutory bodies have been consulted. The commissioned organisations who run the children’s centres – Barnardos and Spurgeons have also been consulted.

Six public consultation events have been held – one in each locality – and these were attended by a total of 107 people.

In addition, officers are meeting with members of the children's centres Parents Advisory Board and parents/others who attend the individual centres in all 15 of the children's centres to hear their views and to take away their suggestions and concerns.

To date individual centre consultations have taken place in:

- Orton – 6 attendees
- Caverstede – 16 attendees
- Wittering – 30 attendees
- Highlees – 29 attendees
- Eye – 27 attendees
- Honeyhill – 24 attendees

Meetings at Fulbridge, Werrington, Bretton, Brewster Avenue/Stanground, Gladstone and East children's centres took place on Tuesday 10th December 2013. A meeting at Hampton children's centre took place on Wednesday 11th December.

The council has received three petitions from the public petitioning against the closure of children's centres.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Emerging issues from the consultation process relate to the following:

- A lack of clarity around the data used to inform the decisions around the re-designation of children's centres and the identification of the 'super hubs'.
- Challenges around the principle of delivering services to the most vulnerable families with the argument being that this could foster stigmatisation of these families and would not develop a sense of inclusion in communities
- Concerns over a loss of services in general to communities and that for some communities the children's centre is yet another community resource to go. There was a strong belief that the children's centre was a hub for the community and loss of the centre would fragment the community.
- Many parents in outlying communities raised the issue of accessing the super hubs given a reduction in public transport to some areas.
- Parents were concerned that access to universal provision via the super hubs would be limited given the increased demand on these services.
- Parents voiced concerns how a reduction in the preventative aspect of children's centres could result in higher levels of need in future years with increased numbers of post natal depression and children on child protection plans.
- Parents voiced concerns about 0 – 2 play sessions not being available – these sessions they particularly valued.
- Parents voiced concerns about access to baby clinics and baby cafes if these are no longer delivered from centres.
- Some parents thought we should consider other ways of delivering at least some services in the least deprived areas – e.g. charging

In addition, there has been some misunderstanding around the function and delivery behind the concept of a Super Hub. In more recent consultation meetings the following description has been communicated:

Super Hubs will have a wider reach area than the existing Children's Centres and will be the focus of activity in relation to working with the 75% of most vulnerable families in that extended reach area as defined by Ofsted. The Super Hubs will be the central point of activity for a range of partners – both currently existing partners such as Job Centre Plus and new partners e.g. integrated locality teams. Services will be wrapped around the Super Hub delivery thus allowing the Children Centre Management to count the engagement of other partners with vulnerable families in the reach area as part of their reach profile for Ofsted. It is not envisaged that other organisations will have permanent bases in the Super Hubs. The Super Hubs will work closely with the Outreach Centres to coordinate activities in these centres as well as using them as a base for more detached engagement with the community.

The methodology for defining which children's centre will be de-designated and which centres will transform into Super Hubs and Outreach Centres has also been questioned. A number of people found it difficult to understand the IDACI data and rationale and were concerned about increases in population and the impact of closing centres at a time of changing demographics. In clarification, the statistic which underpins the proposals is from the latest IDACI (Income Deprivation affecting Children Index). In 2004, the whole of England was divided into 32,482 small areas called Lower Layer Super Output Areas, shortened to 'SOA' or 'LSOA'. These areas each contain on average 1,500 residents (1,000 minimum threshold, 3,000 maximum threshold). The IDACI was used to determine which of Peterborough Super Output Areas falls into the top 30% most deprived. Children's Centre reach areas can consist of several SOAs – for example in Gladstone children's centre reach area, there are 6 SOAs. All 6 SOA's in this reach area fall within the top 30% most deprived IDACI ranking. Therefore it is considered that the proportion of children living in the top 30% area of deprivation is 100%, as all 6 fall within this top 30% ranking. Wittering Children's Centre reach area also consists of 6 SOA's, although none of these fall within the top 30% most deprived on the IDACI ranking. It is therefore considered that the proportion of children in Wittering reach area who are living in the top 30% area of deprivation is 0%.

An analysis of the school census data showing the growth in school populations and the link to positioning of Super Hubs and Outreach centres is contained in Appendix 2.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The re-designation of children's centres in some areas of Peterborough will have an impact on those communities in Peterborough where there is less deprivation and fewer families in need. However, in mitigation of these impacts the following agreements have been made:

Health visiting and maternity clinics (including baby cafes and baby massage) will continue to be supported and to be delivered in these areas – either from the re-designated buildings or from community centres.

Headteachers/governing bodies of many of the schools linked to re-designated children's centres have expressed a strong desire to continue to deliver children's centre like services and will be supportive in housing maternity and health visiting services.

A number of parents have expressed a strong desire to run services/run centres and support is in place to help these organisations in respect of training and delivery. This will be through our early years officers and community development team.

Commercial organisations that currently deliver childcare have expressed interest in expanding childcare but at the same time still offering universal services to families in the community.

To date in the consultation process officers in the Communities directorate have had detailed discussions with a number of organisations and community groups ranging from the two

contracted providers; Spurgeons and Barnardos to pre-school providers, parents' groups and schools to seek alternative usage for the centres that have been identified as being re-designated with the aim of trying to preserve some of the services offered by the Children's Centres.

Proposals for re-designated children's centres are listed below:

Re-designated children's Centre	Emerging Proposals (as at time of writing)
Cavestede	<p>The headteacher and governors are keen to maintain some open access within the setting and they will use their financial resources (Direct Schools Grant) to make this happen.</p> <p>They will continue to work with children and families with additional needs. This will be a commissioned activity.</p> <p>As an Ofsted judged 'Outstanding' provider the centre will be commissioned to share this expertise across the city through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering training • Supporting childcare settings • Mentoring staff <p>The centre will not continue as a designated children's centre. However, some of the children's centre functions and activities will continue to be integrated with the work of the nursery school.</p>
Brewster Avenue	<p>Ongoing discussions with the school in respect of managing the buildings. The school has committed to ensuring health and maternity services continue to operate from the building.</p> <p>The school would also like to offer a continuation of some of the services currently being delivered, the details of which will be determined after consultation and will be dependent on the cabinet decision made.</p>
Wittering	<p>The school is currently pursuing setting up a community interest company in order to seek grant funding to continue running the centre. They have applied for a grant from the Military Covenant fund. The outcome of their application will be known in March 2014.</p>
Stanground	<p>There is a potential for the Portage service to be based at the centre.</p>
East Rural (Eye and Thorney)	<p>Thorney Parish Council are interested in using the space for pre-school provision. Eye parents were interested in looking at the possibility of establishing the centre as a charity.</p>
Hampton	<p>An external provider has expressed an interest in running the centre as a children's centre, maintaining open access facilities for parents and delivering many of the children's centre functions.</p>
Werrington	<p>Continued discussions with the school around future use.</p>
Westwood and Ravensthorpe	<p>Continued discussions with the school around future use.</p>

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Please see above.

8. NEXT STEPS

Continue with consultation as planned with a full report following the end of consultation to be presented to cabinet on 20th January 2013.

Investigate ways of mitigating the impact of the removal of services, as voiced in the concerns raised by parents, through securing additional resources to fund specific interventions. This might take the form of:

- Provide funding for a member of staff to facilitate on open access 0 – 2 play session for parents in each of the re-designated children's centres.
- Extend the Peterborough and Fenland Mind post natal depression project to other areas in the city.
- Replicate the Parents United model in localities where children's centres will be re-designated and secure paid facilitation for this.
- Establish, and publish, a training programme for parents who are interested in running their own sessions or interested in running centres.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 **None**

10. APPENDICES

10.1 **Appendix 1**

Responses to consultation to date.

Appendix 2

An analysis of the school census data showing the growth in school populations and the link to positioning of Super Hubs and Outreach Centres.

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