

**CABINET**  
**16 JUNE 2016****THE PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTION SERVICES  
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INCLUDING  
OPTIMISING THE USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE  
BUILDINGS**

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**Relevant Cabinet Members**

Mr M Bayliss

Mr J Smith

**Relevant Officers**

Director of Children, Families and Communities

Interim Director of Public Health

**Recommendation**

1. **The Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Children & Families and Health and Wellbeing recommend that Cabinet:**
  - a) **notes the outcome of the procurement process for the integrated 0-19 prevention service set out in paragraph 3 of the report**
  - b) **approves the future plans for delivering effective prevention services, within the financial parameters set out in the report (particularly paragraphs 4 to 8 and 35 to 38) and the medium term financial plan, subject to any required consultation as set out in the report;**
  - c) **authorises consultation on change of use for those children's centre buildings where there is likely to be significant change as outlined in paragraph 26 (b) and Appendix 2;**
  - d) **approves the proposals for the future use of children centre buildings where consultation is not required as outlined in paragraph 26 (c) and Appendix 2;**
  - e) **notes the summary of impact of the proposals for the future use of buildings as outlined in paragraphs 27 to 31 and the need for further equality impact analyses to inform the final decisions in respect of the proposed changes outlined in paragraph 40;**
  - f) **delegates the final decisions for the use of children's centre buildings, where consultation is required, to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, having regard to the outcomes of those consultations and equality impact analyses; and**
  - g) **authorises the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Interim Director of Public Health to take all necessary steps within their respective**

**responsibilities to give effect to the above including varying and/or extending the existing contracts of the district-based early help providers and public health nursing functions, and authorises the Director of Commercial and Change to agree appropriate terms for the future use of children's centre buildings.**

### **Context: effective prevention services**

2. Children and Families are a key area of focus in Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan. The Council recognises that demand for services for children, young people and families has been increasing, and wishes to strengthen its approach to prevention, identifying and dealing with problems at the earliest possible stage.
3. In November 2015, Cabinet agreed a new approach for children and families, based on investing in an integrated prevention service for 0-19s. An evidence based service specification was prepared and a full needs assessment was completed. An invitation to tender was published in March 2016, and no compliant bids were received.
4. Feedback from some potential providers supported the vision of the service but expressed concern about the level of transformational change required to bring the current services into line with the specification and vision. Current services include health visiting, school nursing, the Family Nurse Partnership, and some of the provision delivered by the Early Help providers. The Council remains committed to commissioning an integrated evidence-based 0-19 prevention service, using the £9.5 million Public Health Ring-fenced Grant funding as agreed in November 2015 by Cabinet. The Council also wishes to ensure that the lack of bids does not present risk for those families who are currently in receipt of services.
5. The Council therefore intends to move towards the integrated service, within the available budget envelope, as soon as possible and will vary, extend, align or integrate the existing contracts of the Early Help providers and the public health nursing services by 1 October 2016 up to 31 March 2019. This allows a two year period to work with existing providers to co-produce and transform services, working towards integration and achievement of the vision of the service specification during the lifetime of the extended contracts. The next procurement exercise would commence in time for a new service to be in place from 1 April 2019.
6. This will be on the condition of re-negotiating contracts, by 1 October 2016, in accordance with the available budgets ie £3million for Early Help Contracts (of which £1.5million is the PHRFG contribution for prevention service) and a further £8 million for Public Health Nursing Contracts. The development and integration of the prevention service will be taken forward through working in collaboration with existing providers through a Transformation Board approach led by Public Health.
7. In practice, this will mean the Early Help providers will be commissioned to provide evidence-based parenting support that will be predominantly focussed in areas of disadvantage as specified within the service specification. This support will be aligned with the Public Health nursing functions (which include parenting support) and emotional well-being service provided by the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and Family Nurse Partnership. All providers will be required to work together to develop the

prevention service, improve outcomes, remove duplication and/or repetition and determine integrated service pathways.

8. In addition to providing parenting support, the four Early Help providers will also be commissioned to deliver targeted family support and support to those young people who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training with the remainder of the contract value (£1.5 million) for the same contract length. The specification for these aspects will be developed through co-design with commissioners and providers and agreed as part of the contract negotiations.

### **Children's Centres in Worcestershire**

9. In Worcestershire, the Council currently commissions four district-based providers (known as Early Help Providers) to deliver the 'core purpose' of children's centres across the six districts of Worcestershire. The core purpose, as defined in the statutory guidance, is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
- child and family health and life chances.

Children's centre services can be provided either at a centre, as a virtual service via the internet for example, or by providing advice and assistance to parents in accessing services elsewhere. Statutory guidance is that children's centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as they are about providing premises in particular geographical areas.

10. To meet this core purpose the Early Help providers are expected to work in partnership with other providers e.g. early years educators, job centre plus and community health services. Their current responsibilities also include the management (running costs and minor internal repairs) of 32 Worcestershire County Council-owned buildings, all of which are used as a staff administrative base and/or a facility to deliver a range of services to the public from. It is estimated that the running costs (i.e. utility cost) of all 32 buildings equates to £250-£300k per year.

11. In November 2015 Cabinet agreed to formally consult with a wide range of stakeholders on the future use of children's centres buildings throughout Worcestershire. This consultation builds on a previous decision made by Cabinet in September 2012 to maximise the use of these buildings for wider Council services e.g. Social Care, Behaviour Support, School Basic Needs. The intention of the consultation was to establish views regarding the use of current buildings and what other potential uses there might be for buildings. Alternative options included use by schools, use by communities, and use by other services or potentially closure where no alternative use can be identified.

12. A summary of the results of the consultation (which ran from 26 November to 31 January 2016) is attached as Appendix 1. Over 2,000 responses to the consultation were received. The majority of responses were from existing service users who, as expected, continued to be supportive of the current approach. However, the consultation also generated a number of ideas about how these buildings can be used to

better support families and communities, although there was a limited response to the suggestion that children's centres buildings could be used by the wider community. Further clarification has since been sought from organisations submitting proposals and comments, including head teachers of schools with children's centre buildings on their site, and current service providers (including early help and childcare providers, social care and family support) in order to inform the proposals within this report.

### **Delivering sufficient good quality early years' education places**

13. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient early years and childcare places to meet the needs of families in the county. This includes the sufficiency of places for children accessing places through Nursery Education Funding, a universal entitlement for three and four year olds and available to 2085 disadvantaged two year olds. The Department for Education and Ofsted pay particular attention to the availability of places and the take up of Nursery Education Funding.

14. Data from the spring term 2016 demonstrates that 97% of three and four year olds were accessing a funded place and 72% of eligible two year olds. Whilst the take up of two year old places is broadly similar to that in other local authority areas, increased take up is required as research shows that good quality early years education can significantly improve outcomes for children and providing two year old funding will have a significant impact in terms of narrowing the gap for disadvantaged children.

15. Managing the early years market is challenging, particularly given that a large proportion of settings are privately run, and it is difficult to manage both the sufficiency duty and the increase in places for funded children. This will become more challenging in 2017 when the entitlement for many three and four year olds will increase from 15 hours per week to 30, and there will be a need to support the expansion and creation of new places across the county. In addition we need to ensure the quality of settings containing eligible 2 year old funded places to maximise the benefits of that good quality pre-school education can provide for these children.

16. Many buildings currently used by children's centres are ideal for early years and childcare services as they were created and designed with young children and their families in mind, and because they are located in well-populated areas where early years' places are needed. Also, they are all located on school sites and / or near existing early years' provision and would therefore offer an excellent opportunity to expand existing provision.

### **Optimising the use of children's centre buildings**

17. Children's centre buildings are one of many community assets where early childhood support and activities can be located and are not the only vehicle for delivering the children's centre core purpose. However, as an important community asset every effort should be made to ensure they are used to their full potential by the communities they are located in. This is likely to mean service provision will need to flex and change over time in accordance with local need.

18. There is no requirement for the integrated 0-19 prevention service to deliver from existing children's centre buildings. Other community assets will be utilised, and of

course much of the service (intensive home visiting or digital advice and information) does not rely on buildings at all. Not all children's centre buildings are located in areas of high need and so a variety of solutions can be developed.

19. In considering the proposed future use of the Council-owned children's centre buildings, the following categories of use have been considered:

- Continued use to deliver early childhood services (i.e. the children's centre statutory duty) by a range of providers including schools, childcare providers or family support providers.
- Use by school for normal provision i.e. to meet basic need
- Use for other service provision e.g. community library, health base, base for family contact
- Closure/disposal.

20. A centre by centre review has been carried out taking into account how each centre is currently used (they are all used differently), their location, feedback from the previous consultation and further discussions with schools, community groups and existing providers. Consideration has also been given to which organisation would be the most appropriate lease holder where centres will be used by a number of providers/organisation.

### **Consultation on changes to children's centres**

21. Under section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006, Local Authorities must ensure there is consultation before:

- opening a new children's centre;
- making a significant change to the range and nature of services provided through a children's centre and / or how they are delivered, including significant changes to services provided through linked sites; and
- closing a children's centre; or reducing the services provided to such an extent that it no longer meets the statutory definition of a Sure Start children's centre.

22. Children's Centre Statutory guidance April 2013 (included in background papers) clarifies the expectations on local authorities (or a third party acting on the authority's behalf) around whom and when to consult regarding changes to children centres.

23. There are no proposals to formally close or reduce the services to extent that the statutory definition is no longer met. However, the proposals outlined in paragraph 26(b) would result in a 'significant change' from how the centre is currently used therefore a formal consultation will be carried out.

24. There is no national definition of 'significant change' when considering when consultation would be required. There is also a wide and varied use of centres so the impact of proposed changes will differ between centres. Therefore, a centre by centre approach has been taken based to assess the impact of the proposed changes on service users.

25. If approved, consultation on the proposals would start on 24 June 2016 and run for six weeks up to 5 August 2016 with the intention of decisions made ahead of the new

school term starting in September 2016. The Council will lead the consultation working closely with schools, existing providers and/or the new main provider of services. The consultation will be centre-specific and focus mainly on collecting views from service users on the proposals. Wherever possible, face to face consultation with service users will be held ahead of the start of school holidays to maximise attendance. School governing bodies and children's centre advisory boards will also be pro-actively targeted to seek view and confirm support for the proposals. There will also be the opportunity for wider stakeholders to feed in views about the centre specific proposals using an online survey.

## Proposals for future use of buildings

26. The proposals for each building are detailed in Appendix 2 (spreadsheet).

In summary they are:

- a) Worcestershire County Council, unlike other local authorities, remains committed to using these buildings for their core purpose to deliver early childhood services from and / or wider services that meet local need. Therefore there are no recommendations for the closure or disposal of buildings.
- b) As explained in paragraphs 23 to 24 formal consultation will be required for 17 buildings as the proposals for future use are considered to be significantly different to the services currently delivered from them as follows:

Centre	Proposed change of use	Proposed lease holder
Conkers at Hagley Primary School - Bromsgrove	Transfer to school for mixed use including increased childcare, before and after school provision and health provision	School
Tulip Tree at Catshill First School – Bromsgrove	Transfer to school for mixed use including support for children open to social care and health provision	School
Sunny Fields at Charford First School - Bromsgrove	Transfer to school to extend nursery provision and to release space for before and after school provision, parenting support and health provision	School
Riverboats at Upton upon Severn Primary School – Malvern Hills	Transfer to school to deliver early years provision along with health and wider early help services	School
Cherry Trees at Batchley First School - Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including early years provision	School
Maple Trees at Roman Way First School – Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including childcare and health provision	School
Maple Trees at Tenacres First School – Redditch	Transfer to school to deliver a fully operational nursery including increased early education provision.	School
Oaktrees at Oakhill First School –	Transfer to school for nurture and health provision and to support work with families	School

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Proposed change of use</b>	<b>Proposed lease holder</b>
Redditch	(social care and family support)	
Woodlands at Woodrow First School - Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including parenting support, nurture and additional support for 3 - 9 year olds and health provision	School
Bluebell Wood at Perrywood Primary – Worcester City	Transfer to school for a range of provision including health, nursery and a potential safeguarding team base	School
Lavender at Oasis Academy – Worcester City	Transfer to school for mixed use including 2 year old funded provision, before and after school activities and support for parents	School
Applevale and Broadway First School – Wychavon	Transfer to school to deliver provision for parental engagement, joint work with the existing childcare provider and a space for community use.	School
Rainbow at St Mary's School – Wyre Forest	Transfer to childcare provider with access for health and other providers	Childcare provider
Chestnuts at Franche First School – Wyre Forest	Transfer to the school to deliver early education provision and continued offer of health related provision	School
Treetops at Birchen Coppice School – Wyre Forest	Develop a shared use between school, early help provider and childcare provision with the school being the lease holder	School
Half Crown Wood at Stourport Primary – Wyre Forest	Transfer to school to deliver increased early education provision	School
Riverside at Bewdley Primary School – Wyre Forest	Transfer to the school to deliver extended nursery provision along with continued use for other providers including health	School

c) Proposals for use of buildings where formal consultation is not required

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Proposals for future use</b>	<b>Proposed lease holder</b>
Pear Tree Sidemoor - Bromsgrove	Continued use by parenting and family support providers and childcare provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Sunshine Poolbrook Centre – Malvern Hills	Continued use by parenting and family support providers and childcare provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Sunshine The Grove Primary School – Malvern Hills	Continued use by parenting and family support providers	Parenting and Family Support provider
Hollytrees at St Stephen's First School - Redditch	Continued use by parenting and family support providers and childcare provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Hollytrees at St George's First School - Redditch	Formal transfer to school in line with current usage which will result in an increase in childcare places	School

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Proposals for future use</b>	<b>Proposed lease holder</b>
Oaktrees and St Luke's First School – Redditch	Formal transfer to childcare provider to maintain and increase childcare provision	Childcare provider
Buttercup at Fairfield Centre – Worcester City	Continued use by parenting and family support providers including health and childcare provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Saffron at Stanley Road Primary School – Worcester City	Continued use by parenting and family support providers including health provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Tudor Way at Dines Green Primary School – Worcester City	Continued and expanded use by parenting and family support providers including childcare and social care provision	Parenting and Family Support provider
Blossomvale at Abbeypark First School - Wychavon	Continued use by parenting and family support providers including a base for family support	Parenting and Family Support provider
Greenwood at Wychbold First School	Currently used as an office space only – transfer to school to meet basic need and make available for multi-agency use	School
Orchard vale at Evesham Nursery School – Wychavon	Continued mixed use including parenting, family support, health and increased use for childcare provision	Nursery school or Parenting and Family Support provider
WANDS at Westlands First School - Wychavon	Continued and expanded use by parenting and family support providers including childcare, family support and potential community library	Parenting and Family Support provider
Halfcrown wood at St Bartholomew's Primary School – Wyre Forest	Continued use by parenting and family support providers	Parenting and Family Support provider
Brookside at Comberton Primary School – Wyre Forest	Continued use by parenting and family support providers including a base for family support	Parenting and Family Support provider

### **Impact of proposals for the future use of buildings**

27. All of the proposals continue to meet the statutory definition of Sure Start children's centre.

28. Proposed uses would result in increased childcare provision in at least 11 buildings (see paragraphs 13 to 16 above regarding the need for additional early years and childcare places)

29. Proposed uses would result in the transfer of leases to schools and/or childcare providers in 20 cases.



30. The proposals would lead to increased use of the buildings (longer hours and/or wider range of providers) for early childhood services in the majority of buildings. As indicated in the detail in Appendix 2 there will also be a change to the mix of provision which may include a reduction in the range/variety of early childhood services in all buildings compared to current provision. An example would be a building currently used by a range of providers to deliver a mix of sessions and childcare/early years provision which may revert to predominantly childcare/early years provision with a weekly health-related session.

31. These proposals would be expected to lead to changes for parenting and family support providers, at a district level, as follows:

<b>District</b>	<b>Changes</b>
Bromsgrove	Proposals would result in provision from one standalone centre by the current provider as well as delivery in other community venues including buildings transferred to schools. Currently four children's centre buildings are leased to the current provider.
Malvern Hills	Proposals would result in provision from two of the three centres currently leased to the provider, and other community venues including one building leased to the school. An additional base is currently rented by the provider and this is also under review.
Redditch	Proposals would result in provision from one centre leased to the provider, and other community venues including at least one building leased to a school. Currently five main centre buildings and three outreach sites are leased to the provider. The provider also has access to a range of other buildings in the area from which to deliver services.
Worcester City	Proposals would result in provision from three of the five centres currently leased to the provider, and other community venues. This level of provision reflects the needs of the provider for bases to support service delivery across the district.
Wychavon	Proposals would result in provision from three of the five centres currently leased to the provider, and other community venues. This level of provision reflects the needs of the provider for bases to support service delivery across the district.
Wyre Forest	Proposals would result in provision from two centres leased to the provider, and other community venues including at least one building leased to a school. Currently six main centre buildings and one outreach sites are leased to the provider. The provider has access to other buildings in the area from which to deliver services.

### **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

32. Cabinet's attention is specifically drawn to the various legal duties imposed by the Childcare Act 2006 as amended, summarised concerning children's centres in the statutory guidance linked as a background paper. The Council has a duty to improve the well-being of young children in its area and secure early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner calculated to facilitate access to them and maximise their benefit to parents and young children, including as far as reasonably practicable sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need and consideration of whether early childhood services should be provided through them.

33. Lease agreements are in place between Worcestershire County Council and Early Help/Childcare Providers for the use of the 32 buildings. All leases will be reviewed to ensure they reflect the agreed use. Where changes are proposed these leases will need to end by mutual agreement and then be re-instated with the new provider including where the school is taking over the use of the facility. All new leases will need to have built in flexibility to continue to ensure service provision is able to flex and change over time in accordance with local need. Leases will also stipulate the need to continue to brand centres as Sure Start children's centres. Leases are being used to continue to protect children's centre buildings as important community assets as well as mitigating the risk of financial clawback if centres close or no longer meet the statutory definition (all centres where there has been a capital investment are subject to financial clawback from the Department for Education). Leases will also apply where schools convert to academy status as the children's centre building is ring fenced and therefore out of scope of transfer.

34. There are no HR implications for staff employed by Worcestershire County Council. However, the four early help providers will be expected to review and adjust their staffing structures and levels in line with changes to their contract expectations and use of buildings.

35. The original values of the six 0-19 early help contracts equated to £8.5million in August 2013. These contracts were reduced across 2012-2016 by £4million and savings were phased in through using a reserve from the Early Intervention Grant to 'cashflow' the necessary budget reductions.

36. Further savings of £1.5million by early help providers will need to be delivered for 2017/18 with the implementation of integrated 0-19 prevention service with a reduced annual budget of £3million (£1.5m base budgets and £1.5m Public Health Grant). The implementation of integrated 0-19 prevention services will need to be delivered in this reduced budget envelope and providers will need to transform their services to bring the cost in line with a £3million annual budget.

37. Further savings of 10% by Public Health Nursing providers will need to be delivered by 17/18 due to reductions in the PHRFG as detailed in July 2015 Cabinet paper.

38. The optimisation of children's centre buildings will ensure that utility costs can be continued to be picked up by the new lease holder, and avoid a further burden on local authority budgets. An annual sum of £250k is retained for property maintenance and ensure to ensure the Council's asset is preserved.

### **Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments**

39. The proposals support the need to significantly shift resources to focus on delivery in disadvantaged communities and to those at risk to tackle the inequalities in outcomes between those communities and those that are more advantaged. A full PHIA has not been completed.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

40. An equality impact assessment (see background papers) was carried out in respect of the initial redesign and 'considerable potential positive impact' for Protected groups

was identified. However, the potential impact of proposals listed in paragraph 26 (b) will need to be individually assessed for each of the centres in order that local usage and other relevant factors can be taken into account. This individual centre by centre assessment will be carried out prior to the final decision on the use of the buildings and taking into account the outcome of the formal consultation on the proposed changes.

### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix 1 – Children's Centre Building Consultation
- Appendix 2 – Detailed spreadsheet on proposed future use of children's centre buildings

### **Contact Points**

#### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

#### Specific Contact Points for this report

Names: Hannah Needham or Liz Altay

Tel: 01905 843658 or 01905 846503

Email: [hneedham@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:hneedham@worcestershire.gov.uk) or [laltay@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:laltay@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Interim Director of Public Health) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Children's Centre Statutory Guidance
- Equality impact assessment
- [http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/6506/2015\\_early\\_help\\_needs\\_a  
ssessment](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/6506/2015_early_help_needs_assessment)