

Central Bedfordshire Council

Children's Overview and Scrutiny

20th November 2018

Childrens Centres Overview

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This report relates to a decision that is Non-Key

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report has been prepared to provide context on the current operating arrangements for the Children's Centres across Central Bedfordshire alongside an update on performance management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Note the content of the report.**

2. Context

2.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has nine Childrens Centres which work in partnership to deliver a range of child and family health services including antenatal, postnatal, breast feeding and baby weighing sessions (drop-in) advice on parenting and parenting programmes, childcare, information and advice on early years provision and 2-year-old funded places, as well as working with Job Centre Plus to attend Centres.

3. The History of Childrens Centres

3.1 Nationally, Childrens Centres started as Sure Start, a government policy launched in 1998 as an area-based programme to deliver services and support to young children and their families, with £450 million (m) in funding in the first three years. It was initially targeted at the 20% poorest wards in England and then extended more widely and transferred to Local Authority management by 2005.

3.2 In 2004 the programme was rolled out in the 3 phases. Phase 1 (2004–2006) Phase 2 (2006–2008) Phase 3 (2008–2010) with funding according to levels of deprivation against

population figures for the 0-5 living in the most deprived Lower Super Output areas, (LSOA). This became the 'reach area' for each Childrens Centre and was implemented in phases resulting in all families living within Central Bedfordshire being able to access Childrens Centre services by the end of phase 3.

3.3 Phase 1 of the programme targeted the 20% most deprived communities in England and mostly involved converting existing Sure Start Programmes alongside other local provision such as Early Excellence Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries into Childrens Centres, although there were some new buildings. In 2004, Central Bedfordshire was still part of Bedfordshire County Council and the majority of phase 1 Childrens Centres were located in Bedford Borough because of the levels of deprivation. When Central Bedfordshire Council was formed in 2009, Central Bedfordshire inherited 3 centres; The Lawns Nursery School and Early Excellence Centre (now Biggleswade Childrens Centre) and Tithe Farm Neighbourhood Centre (now Houghton Regis Childrens Centre).

3.4 Phase 2 extended the core offer to remaining areas in the bottom 30% of the deprivation scale with an additional 12 Centres allocated Capital Money to be built within Central Bedfordshire. This programme consisted of a mix of Childrens Centre building and building works to make facilities more accessible, and in some cases just to make a base for staff to operate out of under the previous capital programme for early years provision. Due to the rural nature of Central Bedfordshire, vehicles were purchased to ensure that services were delivered as part of the Childrens Centre outreach programme.

3.5 Under the final phase of this programme a further 8 Childrens Centres were approved for development. However, in 2010 capital money allocated to the Local Authority of £1,334,979 was withdrawn which resulted in some Centres not having a base. In these circumstances, services were then delivered from community venues or existing council buildings

3.6 Historically, Childrens Centres were inspected against an Ofsted Framework. During the period from 2012-2015 all Childrens Centres in Central Bedfordshire were inspected with 7 receiving a Good rating and only 2 receiving a Requires Improvement. However, a national consultation on the future of Childrens Centres had been expected from Central Government in Autumn 2014, and in late 2015 the government suspended inspections by Ofsted with the intention of the pending consultation on the future of Childrens Centres. The consultation has still yet to take place.

3.7 In 2015, a formal consultation resulted in the re-modelling, and re-contracting of the Childrens Centres offer in Central Bedfordshire. Only 4 of the existing providers (all schools), a further 3 schools alongside a national Voluntary Organisation were successful in their bids to manage Children Centre services from the 9 main hubs. The new model had services that were universal from birth to 1 and a more targeted approach for children over the age of 1 years old. The re-modelling and re-contracting were driven by targeting services to meet need and taking into account the introduction of Government funded 2-year-old places for some families in England. This alongside maternity leave being between 9 months – 1 year made the existing engagement targets unrealistic for children who were in day-care due to working parents. The model adopted provided a universal service for 0-1's and targeted services for those children 1-5 years in the centres with the top 40% Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) and included any child on a Child Protection (CP) or Child in Need (CIN) plan, any Looked After Child (LAC) and any child with an Early Help Assessment (EHA). Although this reduced universal services any child/parent/family

in need of help/support would be able to access services through the Early Help Assessment process.

3.8 Currently, all Childrens Centres provide a range of targeted services such as one-to-one support for families, mellow parenting groups, Freedom, (Domestic Abuse) parenting courses and delivery of programmes linked to CP and CIN along with specific programmes such as speech and language work, group work with early years professionals, Parents as First Teacher (PaFT), healthy eating and improving health outcomes.

3.9 The universal service for children aged 0-1 includes delivery of the Healthy Child Programme covering antenatal and post-natal services, breastfeeding advice, 2 short parenting courses within the first year of parenting, a mixture of play and stay/music sessions. Centres also work closely with external partners in the community to provide opportunities for services to be held within the centre or co-delivered linked to the needs of their community. They are also the link to other universal services in their areas. They also provide parents with the opportunity to form their own support networks.

4. Local Management

4.1 Each of the Childrens Centres has a Strategic Lead, a Centre Manager and a range of front-line staff which varies in size and specialism according to the centres and the demographics in their reach areas. Across all of the centre's the Family Workers are part of the EHA process. Alongside this, the family workers work closely with the family Partners who are part of the Early Help team within the authority. Both Teams work closely with Social Workers and attend CP/CIN meetings. The Family Partners are internal to Central Bedfordshire and also support with co-delivery of other courses, e.g. Freedom Programme along with other parenting courses, and if they have capacity centre staff can provide creche provision alongside specific parenting programmes. Centre managers/staff also attend the locality meetings in their areas. With the development of the Locality Teams within Children's Services across Central Bedfordshire, locality meetings were developed and take place quarterly to provide an opportunity for multi-agency working.

5. Performance Management

5.1 The Childrens Centres have continued to be monitored on the targets outlined in the now defunct OFSTED framework. These focus on the registrations of new parents (taking into account universal access provision alongside the targeted CIN, LAC etc), meaningful engagement of families both within the 0-12 month period and thereafter for the targeted cohort and finally, meaningful engagements through 3 or more contacts. Meaningful engagement within Central Bedfordshire has been defined as one to one contact with families in the centres, in the home or in the community. It also includes phone calls where support, advice and guidance are given to the parent or family at a time of need. A breakdown per centre is available in appendix A. As a result of the approval from Executive for the re-design and re-procurement of the Childrens Centres, the performance framework is being revamped and updated.

5.2 Another indicator is for School readiness based on a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. (EYFSP) (a key priority in the Children and Young Peoples Plan). This is overseen by the Early Years Professionals (EYP's). The EYP's undertake a range of audits quarterly that cover the environment, the interaction of staff

with parents and children, using child observations along with peer on peer observations. The main measures of EYFSP data are a Good Level of Development (GLD) and average point score (APS). A GLD is defined as all children who have achieved expected or exceeded in all prime areas of learning and in literacy and mathematics.

5.3 In 2017 data showed that with a cohort of 3641 children 72% achieved a GLD, of these 1879 children attended a Childrens Centres and 73% of these achieved a GLD which is an increase of 6% since 2016. Of the remaining children who did not attend a Childrens Centres 70% achieved a GLD which remains unchanged from 2016.

5.4 When reviewing the lowest 20% Achieving Pupils, based on Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) The children that live in the 0-10% most deprived LSOAs in CBC benefitted greatly from attending a Childrens Centres. 76% of those children achieved a GLD whereas only 65% of those who did not attend a Childrens Centres achieved a GLD.

5.5 Overall the data showed that across Central Bedfordshire percentages of children achieving a GLD has increased from 69% in 2016 to 72% in 2017.

5.6. Data for 2018 is still in the provisional stage however against our statistical neighbours we are in the upper middle quartile for % of children classed as having a Good Level of Development which for 2018 is 73.2% an increase of 1.2% on 2017.

6. Future Development

6.1 On 9th October, the Executive Committee approved the re-procurement of the Childrens Centre Services (alongside other services) on a locality basis as five contracts with an increased age range up to 12 years old. Additionally, the services will be commissioned through a competitive dialogue process on an outcome's basis, this means they will be measured on their impact rather than activity in the future.

6.2 The feedback from the initial stakeholder engagement indicated that there is clearly much that is valued by local communities and partners about the current service delivery:

- The recognition that there is support available
- The high quality of the workforce
- The sense of place and community that comes with fixed base provision
- Access to learning opportunities for children, young people, parents and carers.
- The role in helping to facilitate social networks
- That most services are free or inexpensive to access

6.3 However, a number of longer-term aspirations and opportunities to improve services and outcomes were identified throughout the engagement including the need for greater flexibility of services and greater join up to create more of a 'stop approach'.

6.4 This will change the performance measurement of these services to move away from traditional reach and engagement aligned to the OFSTED framework to focus on the difference made by these services.

6.5 This was broadly supported through the public consultation undertaken as part of the re-design exercise. A full copy of the report and the results of the public consultation are available on the council's website (see background papers section for link.)

7. Council Priorities

7.1 This service aligns to the council priorities in particular great resident services, improving education and skills; protecting the vulnerable and improving wellbeing and creating stronger communities.

7.2 The Childrens Centres in Central Bedfordshire provide a key service for residents with children aged 0-5 to support both the children and their parents with a range of services including breast feeding alongside parenting support and information and advice. These services help to support the vulnerable and universally support parents to become more resilient and ultimately to create stronger communities.

8. Corporate Implications

There are no negative corporate implications arising from this report. The report provides an update for the Committee on the history and the performance of the Childrens Centres and does not require any key decision nor change. The change to the operating model was approved by Executive and a link to the report can be found in section 10, background papers.

9. Legal Implications

There are no direct or immediate legal implications arising from this report.

10. Financial and Risk Implications

There are no financial or risk implications arising from this report as there is no change requested and no key decision.

11. Equalities Implications

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Children who grow up in poverty are less likely to get qualifications or go on to higher education, and are more likely to become young parents. People with low levels of educational achievement can expect to be less employable, therefore poorer, therefore less healthy and probably less likely to participate in civic activity. The kinds of people who are less likely to be employed are also more likely to be involved in crime, to have shorter life-spans and to have less fulfilling family lives. Whole families can be locked into cycles of deprivation.

There are four life stages crucial to building people's capabilities:

1. Giving children the best start in their early years
2. Improving educational attainment at school;

3. Creating pathways from education to work;
4. Helping people to get on in work

People's families and communities play a crucial role in each of these four life stages, particularly through:

1. creating strong emotional bonds between parents and children
2. helping parents stay closely involved in their children's education
3. providing resources to allow children the opportunities to develop;
4. ensuring children's aspirations to succeed are raised

Children's Centres play an important role in supporting children and families to achieve better outcomes.

12. Conclusion and next Steps

The next steps for the procurement are outlined below.

Activity	Timescales
Procurement process	October 2018- May 2018 (issue of final tender beginning March following Dialogue)
Award Contracts	Standstill period completed 27/5/19
Mobilisation	1/9/19

13. Appendices

Appendix A: 2018-19 Childrens Centres performance against OFSTED targets

14. Background Papers

The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

- (i) <https://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=5609>

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