

Policy and Scrutiny Scoping Document

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| Committee | Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Topic | Children's Centres | Ref: CYP_SCR_027 File Ref: E.41.01/7/44 |
| Objective | To increase knowledge of the role of these Centres and clarify how they fit into the provision of services for children and families in Essex | |
| Reasons for undertaking review | <p>To increase Member knowledge of the Centres and their role as part of the Council's Prevention and Early Help Strategy</p> <p>To review how these services have been delivered to date and will be delivered in the future</p> <p>To establish benefit to children and families of current arrangements and how these will be improved under the new commissioned service</p> | |
| Topic suggested by | Councillor Terri Sargent | |
| Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial briefing to define scope • Task & Finish Group • Commission • Full Committee | YES. | |
| Membership | N/A | |
| Issues to be addressed | <p>What is a Children's Centre? Does it have a legal definition? What Acts of Parliament support these arrangements?</p> <p>The provision of Children's Centres is a statutory, universal service. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 brought about the statutory duty for Local Authorities to provide sufficiency of children's centres, to the effect that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every child aged 0-5 is registered to the catchment of a children's centre; • all children's centres deliver the Full Core Offer as defined by the Act, for either a Type 1 or Type 2 children's centre according to indices of disadvantage (IDACI); and | |

- children's centres have defined catchment numbers. (between approx 800-1200 under-fives per centre)

Children's Centres are currently delivery services to meet the Full Core Offer requirements as set out by the previous Government. This includes:

- Integrated childcare and early learning
- Child and family health services including ante-natal
- Outreach and family support services
- Links with Job centre Plus for training and employment advice
- Child minders network
- Support for children with additional needs and parents

(Please see Appendix A for more detail on the above)

Essex County Council is currently commissioning for delivery from April 2012 the provision of a community resource for prospective parents, and for children aged 0 to 5 years and their families to be delivered within localities across Essex from April 2012 to March 2014. This community resource will be innovative, flexible and able to respond to the needs of the relevant area(s). This community resource is being commissioned at Quadrant level in order to ensure that it reflects the needs of the 0-5 population and their families within the relevant area(s) and is driven by local priorities, as identified as part of the Local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Board Commissioning Plans

What commissioning arrangements are in place? Why were these chosen in preference to other arrangements?

Re-procurement Process:-

- ECC is currently undertaking a re-procurement for the delivery of 85 of 86 of the Children's Centres. Agreement was gained, through ECC governance processes, to undertake a full tendering process in 2011/12 for delivery of children's centre services from April 2012 for two years, with the option to extend for a further 3 years, and with the ability to vary the use of children's centre buildings to provide a wider set of community services.
- A new specification has been developed to reflect the needs analysis developed alongside the pre-birth to 5 years integrated pathway as part of the SCF Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioning Strategy and in agreement with the Children's Partnership Board and Local Commissioning and Delivery Boards.
- The 6 ECC-run children's centres were included as part of the tender proposition.
- Services to support the families residing within the 86th Children's Centre are provided by Suffolk County Council on behalf of ECC. Services are run from a Suffolk CC under a local authority to local authority arrangement.

Rationale for the current re-commissioning of Essex Children's Centres

Key objectives

- Reduce contract value by 25% over three years (2011–2014) by reducing budget available to lead bodies - actual saving of £4.25 million over the 3 years – 10% in year 1, 7.5% in year 2 and 7.5% in year 3 against base line budget.
- Delivery monitored against an outcomes-based specification to enable

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| | <p>providers to use their skills and experience to develop innovative models of service delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the number of service management contracts from 12 lead bodies and 20 contracts to 4 service management contracts, based on one per quadrant (South, East, West and North East) to enable economies of scale in relation to the management and administration requirements. Competitive dialogue procurement process was chosen to enable an opportunity to work with bidders to ensure best possible solutions are available to the council for the delivery of the early intervention/preventative services. <p>Do all Centres work with the same remit? How are examples of good practice passed around?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 centres currently provide the Children's Centre Full Core Offer to families as set out above. Phase 2 centres provide a slightly different level of the Full Core offer, which reflects the levels of deprivation. Services are based more on a signposting to services than a direct delivery approach, unless there is an identified need of support for a family where an Outreach Worker provides a more intense intervention. From April 2012 the new contracts will focus on delivering a more targeted service where the emphasis will be on developing services to meet assessed local need, with the aim of preventing escalation of difficulties requiring specialist intervention, also providing a step down support from specialist services. Methods of delivery will vary to meet local community and family needs. <p>Do Centres work to a similar style of operation or can they take local circumstances into account? How are locations for Centres chosen?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently the Children's Centre Full Core Offer should be delivered to reflect the communities' needs. From April 2012 it will be even easier for lead bodies to take services out to families as and when they need them as well as offering a centre based service to reflect local needs. Catchment areas and numbers of children for each children's centres were set by the Government. These numbers vary between approximately 800 – 1200 children aged 0-5 for each centre. Locations were chosen within these catchment areas making use of the most suitable buildings being purchased, refurbished or leased as required. As part of the current CC procurement the designated Children's Centre buildings are being secured for the lifetime of the CC Contract to protect this resource. Where Surestart Children's Centre capital has been invested in centres there is an expectation that these buildings are kept available for a much longer period of time depending on the level of finance invested and is up to 25 years maximum. <p>How are children/families referred? Can there be self referral? How are</p> |
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| | <p>costs met?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals can be made by a number of sources. These include by parents/carers themselves, any professional working with the family that feel Children's Centre support would be beneficial, including from MAAG's, health colleagues such as Midwives, Health Visitors and Early Years Settings. • From April 2012 referrals should be received in Children's Centres via the Common Assessment Framework form or via a similar assessment tool • Support can range from accessing drop in services within the centres to a more targeted, outreach service from an Outreach Worker. • Outreach support can be provided in a number of ways. This can be group services that are delivered within the community, for example in a village hall, rather than in the Children's Centre. Services could include Parenting Classes, Baby Massage, Adult numeracy and literacy groups. Outreach can also be provided at an individual level by an Outreach Worker. This can take place within the family home and often includes supporting families to access other essential services such as adult mental health services. • The Children's Centre contracts from April 2012 will have a much greater focus on targeted services that have been identified through assessment either within the centres or within the community as required. • The Local Authority funds the children's centres via a grant; funding was previously ring fenced through the Sure Start Grant, since April 2011 this is now through the Early Intervention Grant. <p>Is the Council satisfied that the appropriate client groups are being dealt with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes under the current expectations from Children's Centre delivery Children Centres are monitored on the % of families they are reaching through their service delivery. The new Children's Centre specification from April 2012 will ensure a more targeted approach for those most in need of early intervention/prevention support in line with the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. Management of these contracts will closely monitor the effectiveness of identifying and reaching these vulnerable groups. <p>Vulnerable groups identified are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child in Need (CIN) • Child on a Child Protection Plan (CP) • Child Looked After (CLA) • Child with a disability / additional needs • Children from workless households • Families where domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health difficulties are a feature • Black and minority ethnic children • Lone parents • Teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers • Fathers • Pregnant women • Multiple Births • Parents with a disability • Service Families e.g. Army - (Children in Service Families) • Families affected by imprisonment |
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- Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents

Is ongoing financial and staffing support from the Council guaranteed?

The funding for financial Years:-

- 2012-2013 of £13.5 million
- 2013-2014 of £12.3 million

have been confirmed by the Council for the purpose of the re-commissioning of children's centres.

What other agencies are involved with the Council's work? And are they fully supporting their role?

Other agencies involved include the 5 Local Children's Commissioning Delivery Boards, Social Care, Health, Job Centre Plus, and Housing.

What inspection arrangements are in place – internal and external?

- Designation of Children's Centres – previously undertaken by Together for Children responsibility now transferred to ECC Early Years and Childcare Service.
- Achievement of the Full Core Offer Status – as above and due 2 years from Designation.
- Annual Reviews undertaken by ECC Early Years and Childcare Service.
- Ofsted Inspections for Children's Centres that have had Full Core Offer status for 2 years or more.

Please see Appendix A for more detail on these inspection arrangements

What links are there with Local Commissioning Boards?

Currently reports are submitted to the Local Commissioning and delivery Boards by the Children's Centre Lead Bodies. From April 2012 this reporting will form part of the monitoring arrangements. Local Commissioning and delivery Boards have been involved in the development of the new Children's Centre specification, and are currently involved in the evaluation of bids as part of the Children's Centre commissioning.

What has been the benefit of Childrens Centres so far?

Children's Centres are currently expected to deliver a universal service to families within their catchment area. Benefits of Children's Centres under the current contract arrangements are access to locally delivered services as outlined in the supplementary paper. The Children's Centre database, Estart, that ECC use gathers data on the number of families that centres have access to and allows for monitoring of types of service offered/accessed. With the current contracts it is not easy to monitor the impact of the service provided, other than through the use of surveys and case studies – these have shown that families have valued the support they have received and that they have been helped with various issues; such as worklessness, managing children's behaviour, adopting a healthier lifestyle.

How are outcomes measured? What outcomes are expected?

ECC expect Children's Centres to use the eStart database which is a national

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| | <p>system to record the number of families reached by Children's Centres. As part of the annual review and reporting to local Children's Centre Strategic Partnerships the reach and volume data is recorded and analysed to enable focus of resource to meeting families/community groups to be targeted to access Children's Centres. This reporting and analysis will continue with the new contracts.</p> <p>From April 2012 Children's Centres will also be measured against agreed Key Performance Indicators and achievement against these reported to the local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Boards.</p> <p>The new Children's Centre specification outlines key performance indicators that will allow a more robust monitoring of impact of services from April 2012. For example through the implementation of the Soft Outcome Universal Learning tool (SOUL) to enable the measurement of the distance travelled for each targeted family intervention i.e. the improvements in family functioning, improved mental health and skills learnt to manage future difficulties if they arise.</p> <p>Other key performance indicators will include targets such as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Centre interventions leading to a reduction of referrals and re-referrals to Social Care, • an increase in the number of appropriate referrals to MAAGS, • monitoring the number of children and their families offered effective support that have a Child In Need plan or a Child Protection Plan, • monitoring that Children's Centre services are targeted at the most vulnerable groups • increased volunteering opportunities within Children's Centres encouraging pathways back into work and study • evidence of appropriate evidence based interventions being used <p>Baselines for the above categories are currently being developed.</p> <p>The Government is undertaking a pilot into a Payment by Results programme. This pilot is exploring key performance indicators that Children's Centres are solely responsible for achieving; once the pilot has been evaluated it is likely these key performance indicators will be rolled out across the country.</p> |
| Sources of Evidence and witnesses | <p>ECC Schools, Children's and Families Directorate</p> <p>Reports of visits to Centres by individual Members</p> |
| Work Programme | <p>Discussion at Committee meeting on 3 November 2011</p> |
| Indicators of Success | <p>Members are satisfied at the quality of service being provided and that it is being provided to the appropriate client group</p> |
| Meeting the CfPS Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Critical Friend Challenge to Executive</i> | <p>Yes</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reflect Public voice and concerns</i> • <i>Own the scrutiny process</i> • <i>Impact on service delivery</i> | Yes | | |
| Diversity and Equality | Are the appropriate children and families receiving a service, and how is this decided? | | |
| Date agreed by Committee | (in outline) July 2011 and (in more detail) September 2011 | | |
| Future Action | TBA once matter has been discussed by Committee | | |
| Governance Officer | Graham Redgwell | Committee Officer | Matthew Waldie |
| Service Lead Officer(s) | Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Director for Commissioning, SCF Directorate Carolyn Terry, Strategy Manager for Commissioning, Early Years and Childcare | | |