

Phase 2 Early Help Family Hubs

Responsible Officer Karen Bradshaw – Director of Children's Services
e-mail: karen.bradshaw@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254201

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides feedback from the recent Early Help Delivery model consultation including the development of locality area bases/hubs, and sets out the responses to this. Approval is now sought from Cabinet to agree the new Early Help Delivery model and consult on the locations of Early Help hubs and the closure/de-designation of Children's Centres as set out in Section 9 of this report.
- 1.2 We want to provide support to children and families who are most in need of our help, quickly and in the right way. There are many families who receive support from a number of organisations to help with problems they are facing, but this support isn't always coordinated in a way that makes sense to the family. This causes confusion and frustration for the family and it does not always enable things to improve quickly enough, or for those improvements to be sustained. This, together with the need to secure £875,000 savings, means that a change in approach is required to focus our resources on those who need our help the most. This will require alterations to the way that we identify and interact with families in need in our communities. Therefore, we have consulted widely with families, stakeholders and staff on our proposals for a new delivery model and this enabled them to share their views and opinions which have helped to shape the service going forward. The full consultation feedback and analysis is available at Appendix C.
- 1.3 The proposed new delivery model for Early Help services across the county will provide whole family support, dealing with all the issues a family faces, with their full involvement and consent. The principle of delivering these services through bases or hubs was generally well received during the consultation and we are now seeking approval to consult on the specific locations. It is proposed that this service would be delivered through lead Early Help family workers based in six Early Help Family Hubs, (which will continue to be designated as Children's Centres in accordance with the Childcare Act 2006).

1.4 It is proposed that the following areas will accommodate the hubs:

- The Centre – Oswestry
- Richmond House – Shrewsbury
- Crowmoor Centre – Shrewsbury
- Rockspring Centre – Ludlow
- A building in Whitchurch yet to be determined
- A building in Bridgnorth yet to be determined

Whitchurch and Bridgnorth areas will have a focus as part of the One Public Estate strategy action plan.

1.5 Having to resource and fund a further twenty Children's Centre buildings does not fit within the proposals as outlined and it is therefore now necessary to consult on the establishment of six Family Hubs (Children's Centres) and the withdrawal of children's centre services from twenty buildings across the county. This does not necessarily mean that the buildings will close. Where other services operate out of them, cabinet's decision regarding Childrens Centres, will not affect this provision/other services.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet:

- a) Agree to the new delivery model for Early Help Services, including the introduction of Early Help Family Hubs
- b) Agree to consult formally on the location and establishment of 6 Early Help Family Hubs (Children's Centres) and the de-designation of 6 Childrens Centres
- c) Receive a further paper following the consultation exercise as set out in recommendation B

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Effective and coordinated Early Help minimises escalation to higher cost intervention services, thus reducing unnecessary and intrusive services wherever possible and reducing financial impact on the public sector. By aligning Shropshire's early help and prevention services, it will ensure that families do not receive multiple appointments and do not need to complete multiple referrals to access support.
- 3.2 The Early Help model will integrate with the Council's One Public Estate strategy, including sharing premises with others, based on the economies of

scale which is more cost effective. There will be more focus on 'who needs services' and 'how do we reach them' in a joined up way, and providing easier access for the public to a range of support services in one place.

- 3.3 The proposal will largely impact on children, young people and families, as the aim is to bring together larger teams of professionals, to support a wider age range of children and young people from 0-19, and up to 25 for a child with disability or special educational need. Services in the main will be targeted at families who need them most and those families that have more complex issues which need resolving. We will deliver a cohesive Early Help offer embedded within the whole family approach that builds protective factors and family resilience, enabling families to help themselves. The offer to families will be personalised, multi-agency and evidence based. The aim is to ensure that children and young people will be safe, live healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible citizens, thereby breaking the inter-generational cycles of risk and vulnerability. Families will become more resilient and develop capabilities to prevent and resolve problems.
- 3.4 A significant majority of the individual face-to-face work with children and families will be undertaken through outreach in family homes or in neutral community settings, rather than in buildings that are run solely for Children's Centre services. This means that specific Council buildings and their use are not critical to the success of Early Help Services.
- 3.5 The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) has been updated following the receipt of the consultation responses and this is attached at Appendix D.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Council's overall financial position and plans have led to all service areas being required to review their performance against best practice. Within Early Help Services the proposed delivery model has the potential to deliver £875,000 of savings.
- 4.2 The focus of this proposal has been to drive out costs attributed to buildings, whilst retaining as much front line delivery as possible in line with Council's direction of travel.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Childcare Act 2006 establishes the duty on the Local Authority to improve the well-being of young children in their areas and reduce inequalities between them. Under Section 2, Shropshire Council and its partners must provide sufficient early childhood services. Section 5A requires the provision of sufficient Children's Centres – as far as is reasonably practical – to meet local need and to target children who are in most need of help. Section 5D states the Local Authority must ensure there is consultation before any significant changes are made to Children's Centre provision in their area.

Local Authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance when carrying out duties under the Childcare Act 2006.

- 5.2 Further, “Working Together 2015” explains the value of Early Help in promoting the welfare of children rather than reacting later when safeguarding issues arise. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.
- 5.3 Early Help can also prevent further problems arising, for example if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or stepped down from children’s social services into Early Help
- 5.4 Effective Early Help relies upon local agencies working to:
- Identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help
 - Undertake an assessment of the need for Early Help, and
 - Provide targeted Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and family which focusses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child
- 5.5 The proposal to deliver a new model of Early Help in Shropshire was considered by Cabinet on 17th January. Cabinet agreed to consult on the proposals and to receive a further report.

6 The Strategic Plan Vision for Shropshire:

- 6.1 We want all children and families in Shropshire to be happy, healthy, safe and achieve their full potential. The Council’s proposed future arrangements for Early Help have been established to improve and redesign services for children and young people, learning from best practice across the country to develop the right way for Shropshire. The Early Help Strategy refreshed in 2016, aims to:
- Make sure children and families in Shropshire get the right support at the right time - helping children and families be independent and build their own resilience so when problems occur they can find their own solutions at the earliest point of difficulty
 - Ensure that children and families only have to tell their story once, by working closely with our colleagues and partners to identify and meet their needs together

7.0 Consultation feedback

- 7.1 Service user, staff and stakeholder engagement and consultation was undertaken in February and March 2018. This gathered views on a new delivery model i.e. integrated teams based in localities and accommodated in Family Hubs. 459 respondents took part in the consultation, 273 people attended workshops, 186 respondents completed the on line questionnaire.

7.2 The public expressed broad agreement about the benefits of integrated, multi-agency, multi-disciplinary teams based in Family Hubs where a one stop shop of provision will support access and inclusion. It will be important therefore to further strengthen the relationship with partners including schools, health, police, housing, the community and voluntary sector and commissioned services ie the 0-25 public health nursing provision and the 0-25 Emotional Health and Wellbeing service delivering mental health services.

7.3 However, some concerns were expressed, particularly by members of the public who expressed the view that the proposals would impact negatively on some universal services – notably child care and stay and play, and parenting courses.

7.4 Respondents were positive about the following:

- Integration of multi-disciplinary teams – who have skilled and knowledgeable and experienced staff to support families
- Professionals located together so that a range of services can be accessed in a single location (hubs)
- Families would have one consistent key worker – those who participated highlighted that the skills of Early Help staff members and workers are clearly valued within their communities
- The ability to get support/information for more than one issue from a single source
- The most important way to receive information was face to face. A range of opportunities were mentioned, the most common being the health visitor
- The use of modern technology was advocated with social media being mentioned regularly. There was also the suggestion of an early help app as well as being offered web chat.
- Early Help is well understood as a concept in reducing the need for more specialist one to one support
- Keenness to explore solutions and to work with Shropshire Council to further develop the new model in the future. It was recognised that cost savings need to be made and that improvements could be achieved through stronger integration of support services

7.5 Respondents expressed that they are concerned about:

- Not knowing where to go for help – it was important to families that the new offer is advertised well. There were concerns that they would not know where to ask for help if groups were discontinued and the Family Information Service needs to be better promoted
- Communication needs to be better – with a range of information on the new arrangements in plain English, that makes sense to families
- There were questions about the definition of a ‘vulnerable family’. People felt it important that Early Help supported all parents, not just those who fit the definition of being vulnerable

- People want to see the retention of universal access to support in their local community. The groups and courses are highly valued with Understanding Your Child and stay and play mentioned frequently within the comments
- Concerns for SEN support were raised
- Access to services particularly in rural areas

The full consultation feedback report is available at Appendix B.

8. Response to the key issues raised

- 8.1 Attached at Appendix D is the 'You Said, We Have, We Will' document. This considers all of the comments made by the public and articulates what is planned to be put into place, which will mitigate against the concerns raised.
- 8.2 Summarised below are our responses to the key concerns raised.
- 8.2.1 Since the implementation of Children's Centres (previously known as Sure Start), the emphasis has increasingly been to focus resources on those who are in most need. Funding to strengthen child care provision, including free provision for some children has been made available to Local Authorities via the Early Years strategies. This proposal will therefore be complemented by Shropshire Council's child care sufficiency strategy, which aims to ensure there is enough provision of quality early years child care. This includes providing free children care for children between 2-4 years under the 2 4 U funding, universal free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, and the extended free entitlement of 30 hours for eligible 3 and 4 year olds, getting children ready for school. It is important to acknowledge these strategies here as parents and carers were concerned about the loss of universal provision including quality day care, universal stay and play sessions, and universal parenting programmes. The above strategies remain in place – and in the case of the sufficiency strategy where there is a need – places will be expanded.
- 8.2.2 There are a range of quality child care providers who offer universal parent/carers and toddler sessions that families will be able to access and we will explore the possibility of additional provision in areas where there is a need.
- 8.3 The focus of the new service will be to make real, measurable changes for the children in the family by helping the family as a whole, and to build resilience so that families are better equipped to handle future problems as they arise. These changes or outcomes will be measured on a family basis, but also across the cohort of families involved.
- 8.4 Midwifery services will continue to be delivered. The idea to co-locate community midwifery teams with or alongside Early Help Family Hubs will be further explored. The health visiting and school nursing service – 0-25 Public

Health Nursing contract commissioned by Shropshire Council will continue to monitor the mental health of pregnant women and mothers with children up to the age of 5 and refer to appropriate support services where mental health has been identified. The public health nursing service also delivers a level of breastfeeding support as part of the healthy child programme, which includes contact with new mothers. This work will continue.

- 8.5 In respect of support for children with special educational needs, the graduated pathway aligns SEN support in schools, and is complemented by support available via Shropshire Councils SEN team. The new Early Help support pathway aims to work with the whole family where there is child or young person with a disability or special educational need. Both pathways will continue to be monitored via the SEND Board to improve outcomes for these children and young people.
- 8.6 To mitigate against the impact on rural communities the proposal includes an outreach service. The new service will ensure that the majority of a key worker's time is spent supporting families, assessing their needs. This could be done in the family's home or a venue in the local community where families feel comfortable to attend. The Council's Digital Transformation programme will explore how to keep in touch using digital technology to enhance communication between service users and the council. The proposed Early Help Hubs will embrace digital technology whilst ensuring families that live in the most outlying areas of Shropshire still have access to Early Help and Family Support services when they need them.
- 8.7 The Early Help Family Hub teams will sensitively take into account the values and beliefs of families who are non-British or from ethnic minorities.
- 8.8 Parenting programmes valued by parents and carers will continue to be delivered universally across Shropshire.
- 8.9 The needs analysis tells us where we should target help for children and families, but it is also key that the new model provides geographical flexibility to respond to changing demand.
- 8.10 The individual skill set of workers will be fully utilised, with a clear intention that every worker will be supported to develop new skills and expertise to deliver whole family work across all the issues families face. A staff training plan will be developed to support the workforce. They will use innovative, creative and very practical techniques and interventions to help families understand where they are (assessment) and where they need to be (outcomes), and develop a clear plan with them to help the families get there. Some of the interventions will be with the whole family, some with individuals and some with targeted groups. The teams will make full use of community resources already available, including volunteers.
- 8.11 We are already engaging with key partners in Health (including Mental Health services for adults and children), the Criminal Justice System, Education, and the Voluntary and Community Sector to work towards further transformational approaches. We have aligned this proposal to other strategies being

delivered including Shropshire Council's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017.

- 8.12 Information on both the Early Help Services that are available and information for families is accessible through Shropshire Council's Early Help and Family Information Service websites. We will ensure that this information is easy to access and user-friendly. We will promote this using social media such as facebook, which is already proving to be an effective medium for the spread of this information. The information available covers all aspects of Early Help advice, support and provision for children and young people, parents and carers, and practitioners and professionals. The Local Offer specifically provides information relevant to families who have a child with a special educational need or disability from 0-25.
- 8.13 Shropshire's most vulnerable children and young people are impacted by domestic abuse, mental health, relationship breakdown, poverty and worklessness. They become engaged in anti-social behaviour, achievement at school suffers, and they are children and young people who need our help. The data tells us that vast majority of these children and young people live in suburban market towns, with a minority living in rural areas. It is proposed that the Early Help Family Hubs are placed in areas of highest need i.e. market towns, with outreach services available across Shropshire's rural villages.
- 8.14 A wide range of data has been analysed to ensure the Early Help Hubs reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families. This includes detailed information relating to property and estates, transport, demographic characteristics, deprivation and economic profiles, benefit claimants, housing, education and skills, health, children's social care and early help data. Information above provides the Strengthening Families (Troubled Families) cohort list, which is available down to street level.

9.0 Property implications

- 9.1 Under the proposed new model, a significant majority of individual face-to-face work with children and families will be done through outreach in family homes or in neutral community settings, rather than in dedicated children centres. Other public and community buildings will be fully utilised. This will be included in a revised Service Asset Management Plan in conjunction with Corporate Landlord to ensure that any property implications of occupying third party buildings are robust and cover the Council's liabilities in this respect.
- 9.2 A review of the buildings currently occupied by the teams and services affected is underway in terms of the usage and accessibility. This review will be undertaken in conjunction with the Corporate Landlord and The One Public Estate initiative, to support the Council's wider plans for rationalisation and consolidation.

- 9.3 The new model, if approved, will result in 6 of the currently designated Children's Centre cluster (as explained in paragraph 9.4) buildings retained as Early Help Family Hubs, and the closure of 6 designated Children's Centre clusters, which equates to 20 buildings as detailed in Table A below

TABLE A

This list outlines the current Children's Centres buildings attached to Children's Centre areas: Oswestry, South Oswestry, Ellesmere & Wem, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, North Shrewsbury (Borders), South Shrewsbury (Roman Way), Church Stretton (Shropshire Hills), Shifnal (Pebble Brook), Highley (River Rea), Bridgnorth (Severn Valley) and Craven Arms (Mortimer Forest). It also details the centres proposed for withdrawal of services.

Retain for Early Help Family Hub	Not required	Not required	Not required	Not required
Richmond House – Shrewsbury	Sunflower House	Buttercup Lodge	Honeysuckle Lodge	
Crowmoor - Shrewsbury	Mereside Primary	Meole Brace Primary		
Whitchurch	Ellesmere Primary	Wem – St Peters primary	Market Drayton Longlands	Market Drayton Infants
Bridgnorth	Albrighton primary	Shifnal – St Andrews	Bridgnorth - St Mary's Bluecoat Demountable	Highley – Severn Centre
Ludlow-Rockspring Community Centre	Church Stretton – Demountable	Craven Arms – Stokesay Primary	Bishops Castle - Crowgate	
The Centre - Oswestry	Holy Trinity demountable	Woodside primary	Baschurch village hall	Morda primary

- 9.4 Until now Children's Centres have been grouped in clusters of three or four sites with one Children's Centre in the cluster being designated with the Department of Education as the main site. For Shropshire this means that there are currently 12 designated Children's Centre clusters, made up of 26 buildings. In this proposal we require 6 of those designated Children's Centres. These will remain as Children's Centres as described in the Childcare Act 2006, but will provide services for a wider age range 0-25 and will have a clear focus on working with the most vulnerable families.

- 9.5 The Council cannot afford to maintain and fund the remaining buildings for Children's Centre services and these will either be used to deliver the expansion of the 2/3/4 child care offer, or used by schools who will support the delivery of early childhood services.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 It is proposed that we now consult on the closure of the identified Children's Centres together with the establishment of Early Help Hubs in 6 locations as specified in Table A above. The final proposal will be presented to Cabinet in September 2018.
- 10.2 Consultation will include on-line questionnaires, service user focus groups and public events. The results of the consultation and the recommended final model including an updated financial position will be presented to Cabinet for a final decision in September 2018.
- 10.3 The dates and venues for the consultation meetings during June and July 2018 are set out in Appendix E.

List of Background Papers

Cabinet report 17 January 2018: Early Help – A New Delivery Model

People Overview Committee report 29 November 2017: Early Help Family Hubs

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Nick Bardsley

Local Members:

All Members

Appendices

Appendix A – Universal provision currently available

Appendix B – Early Help Delivery Model March 2018 consultation feedback report

Appendix C – You Said, We have, We will - report

Appendix D – Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Appendix E – Consultation timetable