



Committee and Date

Cabinet

26th September 2018

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

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides feedback from the recent Early Help Family Hub Strategy consultation including the location of locality area bases/hubs, and sets out the responses to this. Following Cabinet approval of the Early Help Family Hubs Strategy in May 2018, we now seek Cabinet approval for the locations of Early Help bases and the closure/de-designation of Children's Centres as set out in Section 7 of this report.
- 1.2 The 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. This will replace the previous approach which involved a number of agencies delivering separate services in isolation. The principle of delivering these services through bases/hubs was generally well received during the phase 1 consultation, and agreed by Cabinet, who then gave approval to consult on Phase 2 i.e. on the specific locations of the bases together with the consequent withdrawal of Children's Centre services from certain buildings from which it would not be possible to deliver services efficiently

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet:

- a) Agree on the location and establishment of 7 Early Help Family bases and the withdrawal of services in 20 Children's Centres buildings, as set out in section 7 of this report
- b) Agree that Shropshire Council ceases the delivery of universal stay and play provision but supports the delivery of universal stay and play by other appropriate means, including through alternative providers e.g. schools,

day care providers, Pre-School Learning Alliance and the community through parent and carer volunteers.

REPORT

- 3.0** 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. A Children's Centre is defined in the statute as a place or group of places "at which activities for young people are provided. It follows from the statutory definition of a Children's Centre that Children's Centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as it is about providing premises in particular geographical areas. 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.
- 3.1** It is important to explain how Early Help Family bases will continue to comply with the Childcare Act 2006. An Early Help base is where children, young people and their families can access help and support, not just from the local authority but from a range of early years providers. They will deliver holistic, early intervention services to a whole community. The partners and staff working in the family base will work in partnership with the family and the community. They will help find and get help by coordinating support and provision from different services in the area and will be able to provide information, advice and support of what is available eg links with local food banks, bookstart initiative, family drop-in sessions which are quick to pick and resolve family issues, Autism West Midlands who deliver advice and information, training for parents, family groups and events and groups for younger children and young people.
- 3.2** The seven proposed Early Help bases will continue to be designated as Children's Centres. a continued focus on young children, and activities and services that support young children's development, alongside parenting education programmes will be delivered in Early Help bases. Midwifery service commissioners have indicated that this is a real opportunity to align provision in Early Help bases. However, not all Early Help services will be delivered in the designated centres as outlined later in this report. Community Midwifery services already deliver "bumps to babies" groups in local communities, along with "understanding your pregnancy, labour and the birth of babies", and it would make sense for parents to access this type of activity in an Early Help Family base. The range of services available will vary from location to location, based on community need and provider agreement.
- 3.3** 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.

- 3.4 Where childminders are interested in directly delivering play groups for children in their care this could be facilitated locally in an Early Help Family base.
- 3.5 We have been approached by various local charitable organisations. One example is support to young parents with young children, which would complement the targeted intensive support delivered by the Family Nurse Partnership. This could be delivered locally in an Early Help family base.
- 3.6 An advisory board in each base will offer the support and challenge to deliver quality provision, whilst ensuring a menu of services across a wider age range 0 – 25.
- 3.7 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 from the early years' budget, means that a change in approach is required to target 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. Cabinet agreed this approach following which two periods of consultation have been held with families, stakeholders and staff on a new Early Help delivery model and the Early Help Family Hub Strategy. This has enabled parents and carers, children and young people to share their views and opinions, which have helped to shape any changes moving forward.
- 3.8 The 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. This will replace the previous approach which involved a number of agencies delivering separate services in isolation. The principle of delivering these services through bases/hubs was generally well received during the phase 1 consultation, and agreed by Cabinet, who then gave approval to consult on Phase 2 i.e. on the specific locations of the bases together with the consequent withdrawal of Children's Centre services from certain buildings from which it would not be possible to deliver services efficiently.
- 3.9 It was proposed that the following areas will accommodate the bases:
 - The Centre – Oswestry
 - Sunflower House – Shrewsbury
 - Crowmoor Centre – Shrewsbury

- Rockspring Centre – Ludlow
- Whitchurch – venue to be determined*
- Bridgnorth – The Youth Centre – Innage Lane

*It is planned that the venue for the Whitchurch area will be considered as part of the One Public Estate strategy action plan, about which please see further below.

- 3.10 However, the phase 2 consultation with the public highlighted the possible need to include a 7th Early Help Family Hub in Market Drayton, based on the strength of public views as to the levels of need in this area. The Early Help team undertook further analysis of the current referrals and demand for Early Help Services mapped against contacts and referrals to children's social care and concurred with what was being suggested by the feedback received. Therefore, proposals have been amended to include an Early Help family base in Market Drayton, taking the number of Early Help bases to 7. The Council has identified Raven House in Market Drayton as a base. At present there isn't a suitable venue/base to house the Early Help Team in Whitchurch. The team will continue to offer targeted home visits to those families in greatest need and all other lower level Early Help services already in place will continue to be delivered in the Whitchurch area pending the identification of a suitable location.
- 3.11 During the consultation it was determined that the proposed Early Help base at Richmond House in Shrewsbury was not financially viable going forward, due to the current yearly maintenance costs related to the building's poor condition and its ongoing deterioration, given its age. It is therefore recommended that Sunflower House, which is also in Shrewsbury, would be a good alternative because it is already an Early Help base, is a newer building with less costs, and is within walking distance from Richmond House. The consultation did not identify any clear preferences for locations in Shrewsbury.
- 3.12 The proposals focus on creating a step-change in the delivery of Early Help services, focussing interventions on those in most need and ensuring that services operate in a more joined-up way, taking into account the needs of the whole family and ensuring appropriate support and intervention to all members of the family in line with the ethos and principles of the Troubled Families initiative.
- 3.13 The proposal to develop family bases does not impact on the range of targeted support delivered by a range of providers that is currently available and that families will continue to be able to access. The base/hub model provides for cost-effective interventions utilising the base building or other more locally convenient locations.

4.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 The proposals to develop the Family Hub/Base model have sought to retain as much front-line support for families as possible. The proposal to de-designate 6 children's centres impacts only on the delivery by the Council of stay-and-play provision. Legislation does not require the Council to specifically deliver this, nor does it require this service to be delivered in Children's Centres. No other service, apart from "stay-and-play", will be adversely affected. Even if the Council no longer provides "stay-and-play" it remains satisfied that it will continue to meet its statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient child care provision as set out in the Childcare Act 2006. This was outlined in detail in previous Cabinet papers. Nonetheless, we will continue to support the private sector and volunteers to encourage the provision of "stay-and-play" sessions where the community demand is evident.
- 4.3 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. The model relies on a range of delivery venues, as well as the 7 bases.
- 4.4 The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) has been updated following the receipt of the Phase 2 consultation responses and this is attached at Appendix C.
- 4.5 In summary, Shropshire Council will continue to deliver early childhood services in 7 Early Help Family Bases (designated as Children's Centres) in line with the current Childcare Act 2006 legislation. The Early Help delivery model already approved includes a continuum of Early Help provided by a range of services and organisations at all levels of need both universally and targeted. Early Help Family Bases will be inclusive for all, which includes support for children with additional needs. Working from locality bases will promote better information sharing networks, and ease of access to family support services. All areas of the county will be able to access services co-ordinated by the base, and where a family need more intensive support this will be delivered in the family's home or in a venue of their choice, for their convenience, ensuring children and families no longer go missing between services.
- 4.6 The consultation highlighted a greater need in the Market Drayton area – as a result a seventh base is being proposed. This takes into account the strength of feeling and consultation response from parents and carers.
- 4.7 Whilst families will be able to access some services at the base, no individual family will be expected to travel to a base to receive targeted Early Help services, which will be available and easily accessible by families in other

localities convenient to them across the county (see section 7.4 for more detail).

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The focus of this proposal has been to drive out costs attributed to buildings, whilst retaining as much front-line delivery as possible.

6.0 Consultation feedback – key themes summary

- 6.1 Following Cabinet approval in May 2018 the second stage of consultation took place May to July 2018 for 6 weeks. It comprised an online and paper questionnaire, 24 drop-in sessions and workshops held across the county. The consultation explored proposed sites for 6 Early Help Family bases and the removal of Children's Centre services from 20 existing sites. Consultations were delivered in the majority of Children's Centre buildings planned for closure, as well as in other local community venues, allowing a wider consultation.
- 6.2 461 people took part in the consultation (including service users, representatives of organisations and young people). 269 respondents completed a questionnaire, 158 people attended one of 19 drop-in sessions and 35 young people attended 5 workshops (10 also completed a questionnaire).
- 6.3 **Base location and service provision**
 - 6.3.1 Overall, respondents were more positive than negative about the proposed 6 family base sites; averaging 40% in agreement as opposed to 31% who disagreed with the proposed sites.
 - 6.3.2 Support was highest for the Oswestry venue where 46% of respondents were in agreement. Where people objected, 26%, one in four objectors were from the Market Drayton Children's Centre area.
 - 6.3.3 40% of respondents agreed with Whitchurch as an area for a proposed base, however 36% disagreed – over half of these were from the Market Drayton Children's Centre area.
 - 6.3.4 In Shrewsbury 37% of respondents agreed to the proposed family base site at Richmond House, 36% disagreed. 39% of respondents agreed with the Crowmoor Centre and 33% disagreed. In the main, objectors were from the Shropshire Hills and Market Drayton Children's Centre areas.

- 6.3.5 The highest number of respondents to the consultation, 27%, were from the Market Drayton area.
- 6.3.6 It could be argued that respondents from Market Drayton objected to other venues being Early Help bases – because there wasn't a base proposed for their area and this was reflected in the face to face consultations.
- 6.3.7 In the south of the county 40% of respondents agreed with the Rockspring Centre as the proposed base in Ludlow, with 28% in disagreement. 39% of respondents were in agreement with Bridgnorth, with 28% disagreeing with the proposal.
- 6.3.8 Parents, particularly women with young children, expressed concern that the proposals would impact negatively on some universal services being delivered – notably universal “stay-and-play”. This reinforced the feedback received in the first round of consultation. However, parents and carers also suggested that they would be willing to pay to attend a “stay-and-play” should it be provided and on average parents and carers considered £2.39 to be reasonable. In the previous paper to Cabinet the local offer of early years child care provision, including stay-and-play sessions, was confirmed. The Council is satisfied that it meets its sufficiency requirements with regard to early years' provision.
- 6.3.9 Respondents also cited the difficulty of having to travel to bases to receive a service – poor public transport was cited as an obstacle but also the distance, time and cost involved.

6.4 Access to advice and information

- 6.4.1 Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents said they would be quite or very likely to use Facebook to look or ask for information about Early Help. Other popular sources of information are the health visitor, Family Information Service web pages and Early Help web pages. Young people said they would most likely use Facebook or twitter for information about Early Help Services.
- 6.4.2 At the consultation events participants were clear that better signposting of services was necessary, so that they knew where to access them.
- 6.4.3 Provision of health visitor and midwifery services was raised as a concern at some of the consultation venues.
- 6.4.4 The full consultation feedback report is available at Appendix B.

7.0 Response to the key issues raised

- 7.1 Summarised below are our responses to the key concerns raised.
- 7.2 Those members of the public who strongly disagreed with Whitchurch as a base were from the Market Drayton area, given that there wasn't a base proposed in the Market Drayton area. As highlighted in section 3.4 of this

report it is now proposed to add a 7th base to support those families in greatest need in this area, as well as Whitchurch.

- 7.3 Given the current condition of Richmond House, Shrewsbury, (detailed in section 3.5 of this report), it is proposed to use an alternative, more cost-effective venue. This would be Sunflower House, which is an Early Help base already and is within walking distance of the above.
- 7.4 All areas of the county will be able to access services coordinated by the base. Whilst families will be able to access some services at the base, no individual family will be expected to travel to a base to receive targeted Early Help services. The current service offer, including targeted youth support, parenting provision, holistic family support delivered by a family support worker, will be available and easily accessible by families in other localities convenient to them across the county. The delivery of targeted Early Help provision is not reliant on access to the 7 proposed bases and will in the main be provided in the family's home or in a community or other venue of their choice which is locally based and more convenient for them. Families can continue to receive and access Early Help services and support across all levels of need, including universal provision e.g. mental health support, the healthy child programme delivered as part of the public health nursing contract, and midwifery services will also be delivered in the family home or in venues provided by these services e.g. health centres. Facebook sites and the Early Help and Family Information Service web pages can be easily accessed by families who want to find out what, when and how to access the full range of Early Help services available, and we will be reviewing this range of digital media to ensure it is family and user friendly.
- 7.5 There is a range of quality child care providers who offer universal parent/carer and toddler sessions that families will be able to access, including some stay and play sessions for parents and toddler groups. Some parents expressed concern about the loss of these sessions. We will work in partnership with local parents, and local and national organisations e.g. day providers, schools, Pre- School Learning Alliance, who deliver this type of provision, to explore, encourage and support the viability of future stay and play provision.
- 7.6 We will continue to support providers to signpost parents who are vulnerable to universal and targeted support services e.g. health visitors, family support workers.

8.0 Property implications

- 8.1 Under the 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 to ensure that any property

implications of occupying third party buildings are robust and cover the Council's liabilities in this respect.

Tables A and B below reflect the changes and additions as recommended and outlined in this report.

These tables show 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).

Table A details venues proposed to be retained as Early Help Family Bases and Table B details the centres proposed for withdrawal of services.

TABLE A

Venues Proposed to be Retained as Early Help Family Bases
Sunflower House, Shrewsbury
Crowmoor, Shrewsbury
Whitchurch, venue to be determined
Bridgnorth, The Youth Centre
Ludlow, Rockspring Community Centre
The Centre, Oswestry

In addition, Raven House, Market Drayton.

TABLE B

Plans are in hand to transfer these buildings to successor bodies, many of whom will continue to use them to deliver child care provision.

Centres Proposed for Withdrawal of Services	Location	Proposed Disposal
Richmond House	Shrewsbury	TBC by Strategic Asset Management Team
Buttercup Lodge	Shrewsbury	Sundorne Infant School – to support school provision
Honeysuckle Lodge	Shrewsbury	Martin Wilson Primary School – to support school provision
Mereside CE Primary School	Shrewsbury	to support school provision
Meole Brace Primary School	Shrewsbury	to support school provision

Ellesmere Primary School	Ellesmere	to support school provision
St Peters CE Primary School	Wem	to support school provision
Whitchurch Infants School	Whitchurch	to support school provision
Longlands Primary School	Market Drayton	continue to lease to Market Drayton Infants school to provide nursery provision
Market Drayton Infant School	Market Drayton	to support school provision
Albrighton Primary School	Albrighton	school to expand nursery provision
St Andrews CE Primary School	Shifnal	to support school provision
St Mary's Bluecoat CE Primary School	Bridgnorth	TBC under discussion
Church Stretton School	Church Stretton	hand over to school complete
Stokesay Primary School	Craven Arms	to support school provision
Bishops Castle	Bishop Castle	TBC under discussion
Holy Trinity	Oswestry	TBC under discussion
Woodside Primary School	Oswestry	to support school provision
Baschurch	Baschurch	Baschurch pre-school nursery
Morda CE Primary School	Morda, Oswestry	Morda pre-school nursery

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet report 2 May 2018: Early Help Family Hub strategy

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)

Councillor N Bardsley

Local Members: All Members

Appendices

Appendix A Early Help Family Hubs – working for families

Appendix B Early Help Family Hub Strategy 2018 – full consultation feedback report

Appendix C Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)