



Northumberland

County Council

COMMITTEE: FAMILY AND CHILDRENS SCRUTINY

DATE: 5 MAY 2022

Update on Future arrangements for the delivery of Early Help Locality services in Northumberland

Report of Executive Director for Adult Social Care & Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of Report

Following on from last month's report in relation to the development of Family Hubs in Northumberland the purpose of this report is to advise the committee of the proposed delivery route for early help locality services 0-19 going forward and changes to the current commissioning arrangements.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. To accept and agree the proposed changes to the current commissioning arrangements understanding that more flexibility to future service delivery can be provided through all Early Help Locality services being managed and delivered by NCC
2. To note that whilst there will be a temporary increase in expenditure during 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25, (equivalent to two whole financial years), this will be covered by additional grant funding to be received over the same period from the Supporting Families Programme and the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme. This additional investment will allow for structural service changes to be made, alignment of staffing terms and conditions, and further work to be undertaken with partner agencies about the delivery of services to families under the Family Hub model. The expectation is that expenditure will reduce in line with budgeted figures at the end of

this period and a further report on the financial implications will follow once they can be quantified.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the living, learning, connecting and enjoying priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2020-2021.

Key Issues

1. Northumberland has had a commissioning arrangement in place for the delivery of its locality based early help services since Sure Start was first introduced in the early 2000's. This was due to the requirement at the time that a VCS organisation was the lead partner in the development of the Sure Start partnerships. Northumberland partnered with Barnardos and Action for Children to develop partnerships in the early stages of the Sure Start developments.
2. Later developments across the county (then called children's centres) aimed at services for 0–5-year-olds were led by NCC and have continued to be so.
3. There have been a number of commissioning rounds completed over the last ten years resulting in the current arrangements whereby Barnardos and Action for Children are commissioned to manage and deliver early help services for 0–18-year-olds in the South East and Central localities alongside some staff from NCC but that overall management of these localities is overseen by an NCC employed early help locality manager. The current commissioning arrangement has been extended a number of times but is due to expire in September 2022.
4. The management arrangements agreed with Barnardos and Action for Children to cover this delivery model have been in place since 2017. As we move into the Family Hub model these arrangements and the commissioning model sitting beneath them does not allow for the flexibility needed to amend and change working practices as relationships with partner agencies develop.
5. As a result we are proposing to end the commissioning arrangements and to TUPE all relevant staff into the newly developed service structure in each locality based on current need and thinking about how we want to develop working arrangements in the Family Hub model.
6. This will allow ongoing flexibility across the county to align resources to need and not be tied into a specified contract amount for a number of years. It will reduce senior management and commissioning time in both procurement and monitoring of the contract.
7. All buildings within the two localities would revert to being managed and maintained by NCC allowing us to have total say over who co-locates there and how much is charged. Again this supports the developing Family Hub model. The only exception to this is Blyth West Children's Centre building which is owned by Barnardos.
8. To enable this to happen we estimate that there will be an initial additional cost as a result of the difference in staff salaries and pension costs for staff TUPE'd over to the local authority. We would envisage that over time this additional cost could be reduced as services begin to co deliver and align more but anticipate them being need across part of

the financial year 22/23, 23/24 and part of 24/25. Some of these costs will be offset with income received towards the running costs of buildings by partners agencies co-locating.

9. Funding from the Supporting Families grant has been identified to cover this additional cost as the development of Family Hubs aligns with the aims of the Supporting Families programme. In addition, Northumberland has been confirmed as one of seventy-five top tier authorities that will receive a share of £85 million over 3 years from government to support delivery of the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme. The exact funding allocation will be announced on the 26/4/22 and will be used to supplement funding available from Supporting Families.

Background

Commissioning arrangements for the delivery of Sure Start services in Northumberland first began in the early 2000's when funding was made available to local authorities and their delivery partners to develop buildings and services for children aged 0-2 and their families in the most deprived areas of the county. One of the conditions of the funding being awarded was that the lead organisation was a voluntary organisation and NCC partnered with Barnardos and Action for Children.

Over subsequent years the Sure Start model evolved into that of Children's Centres with the aim being that by 2010 every area had a centre offering services for children aged 0-5 and their families. Within South East and Central Northumberland the management and delivery arrangements continued to reflect the partnership with Barnardos and Action for Children.

Across Northumberland further buildings and services were developed but in the main these were then managed and delivered by NCC.

From 2013 commissioning arrangements were put in place which meant that Barnardos delivered children's centre services for children 0-5 and their families including groups, running of buildings and family support in the South East locality, Action for Children delivered the same services in the Central locality and NCC managed and delivered these in the North and West localities.

This model worked effectively with all partners working together in a collaborative way. In 2017, as a result of development and transformation in the early help offer in Northumberland, a wider service for 0-18 aged children and their families was commissioned in South East and Central localities. Barnardos and Action for Children were again successful in this procurement although at this point the manager for each locality was TUPE'd into NCC and a clearer service structure put in place for all localities including those being commissioned.

The commissioning arrangements have been extended a number of times as a result of the uncertainties of the pandemic and are due to expire at the end of September 2022. Over the past five years the early help offer across the localities and arrangements with partners has developed and grown. This has now been reinforced through the national policy initiative in relation to Family Hubs following the publication of the 'Best Start in Life' report in 2021. Committee members heard how this was being rolled out in Northumberland in a report last month.

As a result of this we have a position where health colleagues are now collocated into children's centre buildings from a wider range of teams and new partnership arrangements are being forged to develop joint delivery pathways for services for families going forward. To allow this development to happen we need to be able to flex and adapt our service structures, job roles and locations of the staff so that we can respond to emerging needs and trends in localities.

Re commissioning the services would not allow us this flexibility as we would be tied into a commissioned arrangement which is fit for purpose now but may not be in the near future as arrangements are changing quickly. We would also run the risk of being tied to organisations who have particular service structures which they are required to fit with. This has been shown now as both commissioned services have moved away from the original structure agreed in 2017 in part to fit with their organisational requirements. As a growing proportion of senior manager and commissioning time has been spent on servicing and supporting these commissioning arrangements this will allow for a resource saving to be dedicated to the wider partnership developments required for the Family Hubs.

As all of the current children's centre buildings bar one are owned by NCC and leased out to the relevant organisation these would just revert to being run and managed by NCC.

Blyth West children's centre building is owned by Barnardos and discussions are ongoing about the use of this building going forward.

As there would be additional costs initially related to the changes in staff terms and conditions as they TUPE into NCC then additional expenditure will be incurred in the years 2022/23 (part), 23/24 and 24/25 (part) equating to two full financial years. This will be covered by additional grant funding to be received over the same period from the Supporting Families Programme and the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme.

This temporary increase costs will be offset in part by income achieved through recouping running costs of buildings in which partner staff are based and overtime through the realigning of staff to meet demand and need.

We are proposing that the Supporting Families grant funding is utilised to cover the temporary increase in expenditure and supplemented by Family Hub and Start for Life Programme funding. The development of the family hubs aligns with the aims of both programmes and our recently allocated indicative amounts would allow this investment.

Implications

Policy	This proposal allows NCC to respond flexibly to the current and future national policy in relation to early help and prevention services
Finance and value for money	Although there are initial additional costs over time we think it will show best value for the resource available through allowing flexible use of the finance available across the county rather than being tied into contracts for a number of years. The additional costs are expected to be met by grant funding.
Legal	The current contracts and leasing arrangements would come to an end.
Procurement	There would be a saving for procurement in a reduction in commissioning and contract monitoring.
Human Resources	TUPE would apply to most of the current staff team employed by the two organisations.
Property	The children's centre buildings leased out would be managed by NCC going forward in the two localities. There would need to be discussions involving property services and Barnardos about the use of Blyth West children's centre building
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	This would not impact on children and families negatively and in fact would have a positive impact as we would have more flexibility to respond to needs across the county as they emerge.
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	We would undertake a communication strategy with families living in the two localities to explain the changes and provide opportunities for them to meet with managers.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	This is part of the ongoing development of early help and prevention services for children and families and is aligned to all public health and NHS England agendas
Wards	Wards in SE and Central Northumberland

Background Papers

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Service Director Finance & Deputy Section 151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Deputy Chief Executive	Cath McEvoy-Carr
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