

An assessment of need: the methodology for selecting locations for the proposed new Children and Family Centres

This document was included in the supporting information made available during the public consultation

The purpose of this document is to set out the methodology followed to determine locations for the proposed new Children and Family Centres.

1.0 Principles of the methodology

The two principles behind the methodology used to determine the locations of the proposed new Children and Family Centres:

1. Ensure that the proposed future arrangements enable the local authority to continue to be able to do the things it is required to do by law
2. Build on the work undertaken by the cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group on Children's Early Intervention Services and the principles detailed in their report to Cabinet on 23 June 2015

1.1 Legal duties

The Childcare Act 2006 imposes a number of duties on local authorities. The general duty contained in section 1 is to (a) improve the well-being of young children in their area; and (b) reduce inequalities between young children in their area across a range of matters including: physical and mental health and emotional well-being; protection from harm and neglect; education; training and recreation; the contribution made by them to society; and social and economic well-being.

The accompanying statutory guidance, *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance for local authorities, commissioner of local health services and Jobcentre Plus, April 2013*, sets out the different factors local authorities should be aware of in relation to Children's Centres. Those most relevant to determining the location of Oxfordshire's proposed new Children and Family Centres are as follows:

- ensure that a network of Children's Centres is accessible to all families with young children in their area;
- ensure that Children's Centres and their services are within reasonable reach of all families with young children in urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport;
- target Children's Centres services at young children and families in the area who are at risk of poor outcomes through, for example, effective outreach services, based on the analysis of local need;
- demonstrate that all children and families can be reached effectively;
- not close an existing Children's Centre site in any reorganisation of provision unless they can demonstrate that, where they decide to close a Children's Centre site, the outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected and will not compromise the duty to have

sufficient Children's Centres to meet local need. The starting point should therefore be a presumption against the closure of Children's Centres.

The other factors local authorities need to be aware of are:

- together with local commissioners of health services and employment services, consider how best to ensure that the families who need services can be supported to access them;
- ensure that opening times and availability of services meet the needs of families in their area;
- take into account the views of local families and communities in deciding what is sufficient Children's Centre provision;
- take account of families crossing local authority borders to use Children's Centres in their authority. Families and carers are free to access early childhood services where it suits them best; and
- take into account wider duties under section 17 of the Childcare Act 1989 and under the Child Poverty Act 2010.

The Local Authority believes that the proposed new model, as detailed in the full consultation documents, responds to these appropriately.

The published guidance, *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance for local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus. April 2013*, can be found by viewing the following web page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sure-start-childrens-centres>

1.2 Cabinet Advisory Group

The Cabinet Advisory Group agreed a set of principles to guide their work and subsequent recommendations to Cabinet on 23 June 2015. The principles most relevant to determining the location of the proposed new Children and Family Centres are as follows:

- To ensure the County Council services are targeted to those in greatest need in both rural and urban locations (i.e. ensure geographic spread);
- To do what the council is required to do by legislation, regulation or policy.

The other principles established by the Cabinet Advisory Group include:

- To ensure the child and families are listened to and that their experience of services is seamless and integrated;
- To support partners to provide universal services;
- To protect the reputation of the Council.

The Local Authority believes that the proposed new model, as detailed in the full consultation documents, responds to these appropriately.

2.0 The methodology for determining the locations

Given the principles set out above, the process for determining the proposed locations was as follows:

1. Define the total number of Children and Family Centres within Oxfordshire;

2. Define the broad geographical spread by assigning a total number of Children and Family Centres to three broad areas within the county (three service areas);
3. Determine the 'ideal' locations of the proposed Children and Family Centres within each service area.

The process undertaken within each of these steps is set out below.

2.1 Define the total number of Children and Family Centres within Oxfordshire

Given the significant budget reductions required, and therefore the need to make clear decisions about how to prioritise spending, a view was taken that, whilst physical premises are valuable, the financial priority should be on continuing to employ as many staff as possible within the new service.

The financial modelling for all elements of the proposed new service model divided the £12 million budget as follows:

Budget Assumptions	£m
Continued delivery of Youth, Engagement Service	1.0
Estimated Premises costs & other supplies and services	1.5
Amount available for staffing	9.5
Total Available Budget for Combined Service	12.0

A staffing structure was developed for the new service model which determined that, within the local authority's preferred model (Option 1: No universal services), teams of skilled professionals could be employed to provide services from eight Children and Family Centres.

In developing the staff structure, the priority was to maximise the use of buildings and minimise the proportion of the budget spent on buildings, by ensuring that sufficient staff are available to provide services from each Children and Family Centre throughout the day and into the early evening, and to provide an extensive outreach service to children and families at other venues. Budget for staffing was prioritised over funding the running of buildings.

The same methodology was used to determine the number of professionals, and therefore Children and Family Centres, that could be provided under Option 2 (Limited universal services) and Option 3 (Universal services through community investment).

Under Option 2, there is capacity to provide eight Children and Family Centres. However, as Option 3 proposes a £1 million grant funding to the voluntary and community sector this reduces the budget available for staffing and thereby the number of staff available to provide services through the Children and Family Centres is also reduced. Under Option 3, six Children and Family Centres are proposed.

2.2 Define overall geographic spread of Children and Family Centres within three broad areas of the County

Before identifying specific locations for the proposed Children and Family Centres, a calculation was made to apportion the total number of Centres between the three service areas used by the local authority to organise its services.

These services areas are:

North - covering Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Council areas

Central - covering Oxford City

South - covering South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council areas.

This approach built on that undertaken by the Cabinet Advisory Group and used the following data sets:

- Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- Prior home locations of children who became looked after by Oxfordshire County Council between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of Children who were subject to child protection plans between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of families identified in the wider Phase 1 Thriving Families cohort;
- Oxfordshire County Council child population forecasts 2014-2019.

An apportionment of Centres between each service area was made by comparing the numbers of children in each dataset who live within each service area, weighting the figures for the first four datasets by anticipated population change over the next five years. For each service area a total number of children “in need” was calculated, and the relative “need” between each area was used to apportion the eight Centres. Since this sometimes resulted in non-whole numbers, the figures were rounded to give a final allocation of Childrens Centres for each service area.

This process was carried out for the option of providing eight and six Children and Family Centres across Oxfordshire.

The results were as follows:

Area	8 Centres	6 Centres
North	3	2
Central	3	3
South	2	1

2.3 Determine the 'ideal' locations of the proposed Children and Family Centres

Having allocated the total number of Centres by service area, the next step was to determine the 'ideal' locations within each service area. The process for doing this began with the assumption that the main settlements within Oxfordshire were likely to be the most appropriate locations for the Children and Family Centres because of their accessibility in terms of transport links, their geographical spread, and that localised deprivation tends to be concentrated in urban areas.

This assumption of locating Centres in the main settlements was then tested using an algorithm that considered the location of 'need' as defined:

- Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- Prior home locations of children who became looked after by Oxfordshire County Council between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of Children who were subject to child protection plans between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of families identified in the wider Phase 1 Thriving Families cohort.

Again, these indicators were weighted by population forecasts to give a better indication of where need is likely to be located in the coming years.

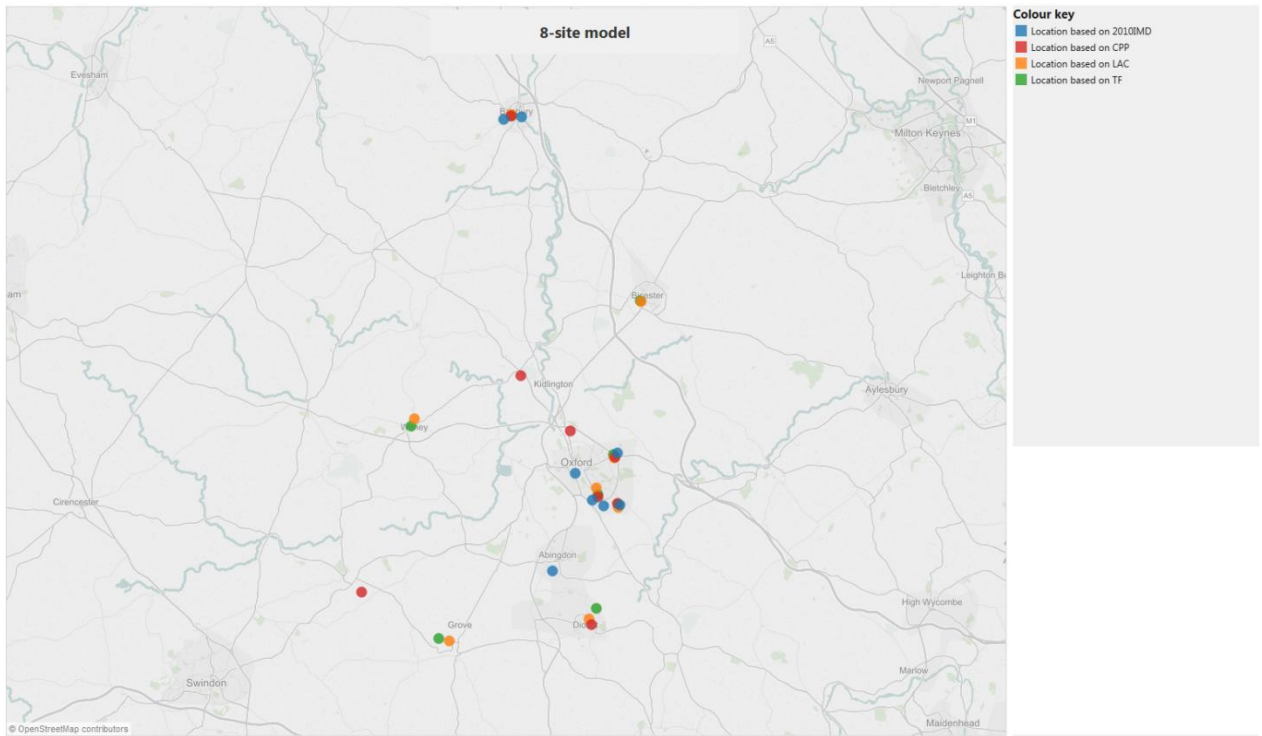
The algorithm was used to test potential Children and Family Centre locations, checking whether each increased or decreased the distance between Centre and family 'in need'. In this way, locations were identified that minimised the average distance between each Centre and families 'in need'.

3.0 The results

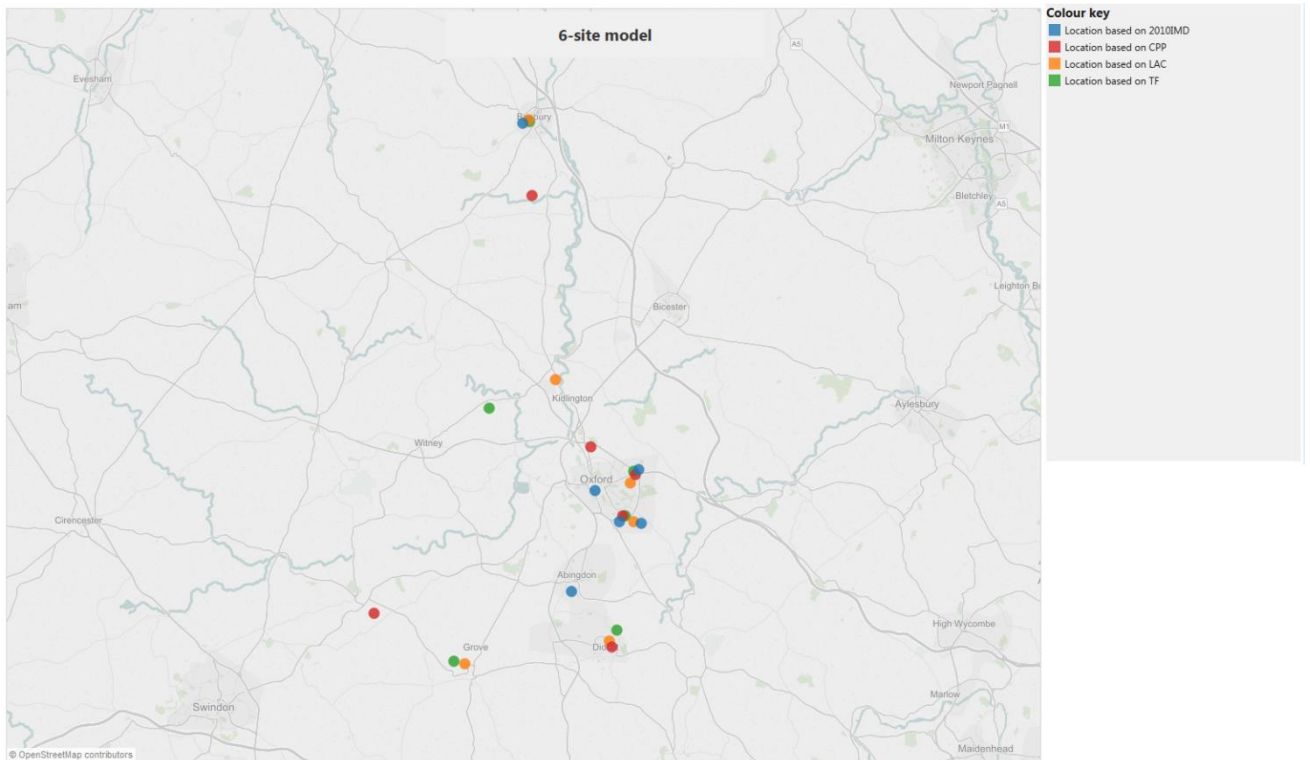
By overlaying the data sets on to a map of Oxfordshire, clusters of need emerged.

However, as the maps show, there was some variation between each indicator of the 'ideal' location identified. Therefore the proposed locations could only be determined through further manual interpretation.

Map 1: Eight Children and Family Centres



Map 2: Six Children and Family Centres



5.0 The locations

Arising from the manual interpretation step, and considering the principles described previously, locations for the proposed Children and Family Centres were identified. These are:

Option 1: No universal services and Option 2: Limited universal services:

Option 1 and 2 set out a model of eight Children and Family Centres.

North area		Central Area	South area	
Cherwell District	West Oxfordshire District	Oxford City	South Oxfordshire District	Vale of White Horse District
Banbury	Witney	Oxford - Blackbird Leys	Didcot	Abingdon
Bicester		Oxford - Rose Hill / Littlemore		
		Oxford - Barton/Sandhills		

Option 3: Universal services through community investment:

Option 3 sets out a model of six Children and Family Centres.

North area		Central Area	South area	
Cherwell District	West Oxfordshire District	Oxford City	South Oxfordshire District	Vale of White Horse District
Banbury	Witney	Oxford - Blackbird Leys	Didcot	
		Oxford - Rose Hill / Littlemore		
		Oxford - Barton/Sandhills		