

CABINET – 23 FEBRUARY 2016

Future Arrangements in Children's Social Care

Report by Jim Leivers, Director of Children, Education and Families

Introduction

1. On 15 September 2015, Cabinet agreed to commence with a public consultation on proposals to redesign the county's children's services to focus support on the most vulnerable children, and consequently reconfigure existing the existing Early Intervention Services.
2. The public consultation ran from 14 October 2015 until 10 January 2016, and views were gathered on three options for delivering a new children's service which would support 0-19 year olds (up to 25 years if children have additional needs) , and their families, and integrate services currently provided by Children's Centres, Early Intervention Hubs and Children's Social Care.
3. All three options put forward for public consultation proposed the reconfiguring of the work of the Early Intervention and Children's Social Care Services to create one integrated service for 0-19 year olds, and their families. This service would target vulnerable children, and those at risk and include the creation of up to 8 Children and Family Centres located in the most deprived areas of Oxfordshire. The three options can be summaries as follows:
 - Option 1: Create 8 Children and Family Centres, and target support at those most in need via the Centres and an extensive outreach service to all parts of the County. Under this option, universal/open access services would cease to be provided or commissioned.
 - Option 2: Create 8 Children and Family Centres, and target support at those most in need via the Centres. Limited universal/open access services would be provided by reducing outreach support
 - Option 3: Create 6 Children and Family Centres and make £1million available to the community and voluntary sector to provide services to children and families.
4. In February 2016 the county council will set its budget for the coming financial year. It is anticipated this will reflect the significant reduction in available funding from Central Government and require Children Education and Families Directorate to reduce further spending on its early intervention and preventative services. The decision of county council will build upon those taken in 15/16 and reduce the funding within the Early Intervention Service budget from £16 million to £8 million. These reductions are largely to be met from Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs.
5. In addition, to the budget decisions within the Early Intervention Service, the county's Children's Social Care Service is dealing with growing numbers of child protection, looked after and children in need cases (as defined by the Children Act 1989). Between March 2011 and March 2015 the number of children on a child protection plan rose by 71 per cent. Although this increase is much higher

than the national average of 16 per cent, and that of our statistical neighbours, it is in common with other authorities that have been through high profile Child Sexual Exploitation cases.

6. Concomitant to, and associated with, the rise in children on child protection plans, the number of children who are looked after by the local authority has risen by over 20% per cent, from 427 in March 2011, to a 514 in March 2015.
7. The rise in activity within Children's Social Care has created unsustainable pressures in the service. The average caseload for social workers within the Family Support Teams has risen to 20 children, from an average of 16 last year, with caseloads ranging from 14-32. This has led, during 2015/16, to significant overspends within Children's Social Care as additional staff have been required to address workload pressures.
8. In order to address these pressures and costs it is necessary to fundamentally reorganise the Directorate. This includes new organisational arrangements within Schools and Learning as well as Children's Social Care and Safeguarding. A full scale redesign of children's services is required to move resources away from early help and open access services into the prioritisation of statutory engagement and intervention as the primary drivers to proposed organisational change. Integrating those services currently provided by Children's Social Care with elements of those within the existing Early Intervention Service is the most cost-effective and safest way to ensure children are protected and vulnerable families receive the support they need to prevent issues escalating further.

Public Consultation

9. In September 2015 Cabinet required the proposals to reduce preventative and early intervention services be the subject of detailed consultation with the local community and professional organisations. This exercise was led by the Cabinet member for children's services and supported by members of the specially constituted cross party Cabinet Advisory Group. The consultation period commenced on 14 October and ended on 10 January 2016. It has been independently supported and verified by The Campaign Company. A copy of the full report from The Campaign Company is provided in Annex 1.
10. In summary, most of the consultees were not supportive of change but wished to retain the status quo and for it to be delivered through current arrangements. These outcomes are not surprising. The current form of provision is popular and well regarded by service users and professional organisations engaged with Children Centre and Early Intervention Hub provision.
11. Following decisions made by Council in regarding Directorate funding in 2015 and likely reductions in 2016/17 it is no longer possible to sustain current provision and consequently the priorities of the service need to change. However, a number of issues arising from the consultation will where possible be built into new organisational arrangements. These include:
 - Provision of preventative services which stop concerns about vulnerable children escalating to a point where they require statutory support

- Agreement with health to enable health professionals to deliver universal and targeted services to the wider community from the Children and Family Centres,
- Operating a mobile bus service to provide services to rural communities and the traveller community as they are less likely to attend the main Centres.
- Running open access sessions from the Children and Family Centres, enabling children and families living in the most deprived areas of Oxfordshire to attend stay and play and youth sessions, and reduce any stigma associated with attending the Centres.

Approach to the public consultation

12. The county council is required by law to consult service users and other stakeholders before making any service changes that might lead to the closure of Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs.
13. To meet this requirement, the council organised a three-month consultation (14 October 2015 to 10 January 2016) to inform service users, other stakeholders and the wider public about the proposed changes and enable them to have their say.
14. The consultation process was designed to ensure that information was provided in an accessible way, and to gather and represent a wide range of views. The council received 2,715 responses to the consultation and engaged with over 850 people at meetings and events.

A full list of the public consultation activities is provided in Appendix 1.

Enabled participation

15. Consultation was carried out via an on-line and hard copy questionnaire, at public meetings, focus groups with service users and workshops with invited stakeholders including service user representatives from Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs. The questionnaire, and supporting information, was made available on the council's website and in paper copies in all Children's Centres, Early Intervention Hubs and libraries.
16. The focus groups which were held with service users provided an opportunity for children, young people and families to explain the importance of Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs in their lives and the impact potential changes could have.
17. Those affected by the proposed changes were able to make informed responses. Consultation documents and meetings presented the reasons for the public consultation and details of three proposed options for a new 0-19 service model. This included how the council would continue to fulfil its obligations to meet the needs of families with children under the age of five as part of a new service model.
18. We made sure the views of vulnerable service users from disadvantaged communities and minority groups were represented by holding discussions in

one-to-one sessions, group activities such as open access youth sessions, focus groups and meetings.

19. The proposals to transform the Early Intervention Service, including the reduction in funding, was publicised through the local media, with extensive TV, radio and print coverage throughout the consultation period. The proposals were also publicised through social media.

Independent analysis

20. To ensure the results were analysed impartially, the county council contracted The Campaign Company, an independent company experienced in analysing responses to public consultations, to review the results and produce an independent report. The full report is provided in Annex 1 of this document.
21. Anything received by the county council prior to the opening of the consultation date was included in the submissions made to The Campaign Company. Although the consultation closed on 10 January 2016, responses continued to be collected and submitted to The Campaign Company until 12 January 2016, to allow for postal delays.
22. Responses received after 12 January 2016 were not included in the analysis of the consultation, but were included in a file of 'late responses' available for Members to view.

Summary of consultation response

Profile of respondents

23. Overall, the breakdown of response to the consultation was as follows:

Consultation channel	Number of responses
Paper questionnaire	666
Online questionnaire	1575
E-mails	88
Letters	36
Tweets	322
Facebook posts	28
Total	2715

24. In addition to the responses noted above, 32 sets of notes were taken at consultation meetings, 3 at public meetings, 8 at stakeholder meetings and 21 at small focus group meetings held by Children's Centres and Hubs.
25. Evidence suggests that public consultations are not representative exercises as some members of the local community will be more motivated to respond to them than others. When compared to census data, young people and men are under represented among respondents, whereas women and those aged 25-44 years were more likely to respond. This is not surprising given these groups are the most frequent users of the current services. The ethnicity of respondents, broadly matches that of Oxfordshire's population.

26. 61 per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire describe themselves as a user of Children's Centres and/or Early Intervention Hubs. However of these almost 75 per cent were a user of a Children's Centre rather than a Hub.

27. Questionnaire respondents use the children's centres and early intervention hubs for a number of services but 69 per cent cited 'Stay and Play' sessions and 'Family Drop-ins' as the most commonly used services. The next most commonly cited service used was 'Health Visitor' with 44 per cent of respondents.

Key themes from consultation responses

28. Rejection of all proposals

Feedback

The most significant message that has emerged from the survey element of the consultation is that all the proposals put forward were largely rejected by respondents, with 71 per cent favouring none of the options proposed in the consultations. Option 1 and Option 3 were favoured by eight per cent and Option 2 by 14 per cent.

Furthermore a significant portion of respondents indicated a reluctance to engage in a dialogue around the removal of universal services that are open to anyone, citing concerns that their engagement might be viewed as tacit support for one or more of the proposals. Many of the responses included a defence of universal services and a rejection of the proposals.

Response

The county council understands that people highly value the services currently available and are very motivated in opposition to cuts to these services. However, the financial pressures on the council mean that it is not possible to continue to provide the same broad range of service into the future.

The county council has produced a final revised proposal for the service based on all the feedback received.

29. Opposition to integration of services

Feedback

Over two thirds of survey respondents rejected the proposal to deliver integrated services for 0-19 year olds.

Response

The council has to respond to growing pressures in children's social care, year on year increases in the number of complex cases, whilst making significant reductions in service budgets.

To achieve this we need to integrate services both across Children's Social Care and Early Intervention and work increasingly closely with our partners such as health and schools. Through this duplication and management levels can be reduced, maximising the numbers of front line staff that can be retained and

support provided to the most vulnerable children who the council has a statutory duty to protect and support.

30. Disagreement to targeting services to vulnerable children and families

Feedback

The statement within the survey, "*It is important to offer more services to vulnerable children/families than to all children and families,*" while supported by a reasonably large minority (36.5 per cent), was rejected by the majority.

Response

The county council has a legal obligation to support those children and families who are most at risk or in greatest need. With reducing resources it is no longer possible to provide the same level of open access provision that is currently enjoyed by many people, and continue to meet our legal responsibilities.

The county council is proposing to provide limited open access provision within the Children and Family Centres and will work with groups such as parish, town and district councils and voluntary and community groups to develop their own community based open access services.

31. Concern over loss of preventative services

Feedback

There is a strong case put forward for the retention of preventative services in order to stop the needs of families escalating to a point where they require more expensive statutory support.

Response

The county council acknowledges the vital role that prevention plays in providing early support to children and families that could otherwise escalate to crisis point.

The new model will retain preventative work through the creation of a Locality and Community Support Service, which will provide advice and guidance to universal services, including schools, health services and voluntary and community groups to enable them to support vulnerable children and families within their communities. In addition, the Family Support Service will provide targeted early help to families with multiple needs to prevent their needs escalating to a point where they require statutory social care input.

In addition, a range of services outside the scope of these proposals, will continue to work to identify and support families on important issues such as post-natal depression and breastfeeding, according to need. These include GP services, maternity services, health visiting and school health nurse services.

32. Associated Health and Social Impacts

Feedback

Local provision of breastfeeding support was cited as highly beneficial to many and in some cases has supported mothers to breastfeed for longer. Removal of local support will undermine the realisation of the associated health benefits.

The potential loss of early identification and support of parental mental health issues was identified, particularly around post-natal depression.

The reduction in local networks and social capital that will arise from removing opportunities for parents to mix in a local environment was highlighted in feedback. This will particularly affect those families who are either new to an area, or who have English as a second language.

Response

The council continues to commission support post-natal and breastfeeding services via Public Health and it is the intention that these services, along with other universal and targeted support will continue to be available from Children and Family Centres.

Throughout the public consultation, the council has had discussions with groups, including parents, district, town and parish councils to explore the continued use of buildings that cease to be funded by the Service. A framework has been established to inform this work and the local authority is committed to continuing this work over the coming months.

33. Issues with accessibility within the new proposed model

Feedback

Respondents suggested that the loss of 'on the doorstep' provision will reduce the accessibility of the service. In particular a case is made that this will isolate families living in rural areas, and those not able to drive.

Response

By locating Children and Family Centres in the most deprived areas of the county, the county council intends to provide good access to the highest concentration of children in need or at risk of neglect or harm.

Outreach support will be provided to children and families ensuring vulnerable children and families receive support wherever they live. In addition, a mobile bus will provide services to rural communities and traveller communities.

34. Funding of services

Feedback

There is significant general opposition to cutting services. In addition, arguments are put forward that the cuts should not be made from children's services and should be found from other areas of the council.

Response

Funding from Central Government has reduced significantly. The council has a legal obligation to produce a balanced budget and is looking across all service areas for savings.

35. Alternative proposals

Feedback

Just over 51 per cent of those that responded to a question about whether they had any alternative proposals for how the council could meet the £8 million savings included some suggestions:

- Seeking additional innovation and efficiencies from the existing centres
- Alternative sources of funding (including from central government, third sector or others)
- Increasing council tax

Response

The county council has been reducing its budgets for some time however, the scale of savings now required means that further innovations and efficiencies based on maintaining current service provision will not be sufficient. A full scale redesign of children's services is required to move resources away from open access services into statutory services to ensure safe and effective services for vulnerable children and families.

By far the most significant contributing factor to the level of savings required is the large reduction in the funding the county council receives from central government. This has resulted in a reduction in excess of £210million in funding for county council services. As such, it is not realistic to request additional funding from central government.

Additional sources of funding are available to charity and community organisations, but local authorities are not able to access this funding stream. This is one of the reasons the county council is interested in working with community groups, to support them to develop their own services.

The county council is not able to raise council tax by more than two per cent without carrying out a referendum of all the residents in Oxfordshire. Assuming popular support for this, it is estimated that even a rise of 10 per cent would not be enough to maintain current services.

Future service

36. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to providing safe and effective services for vulnerable children and their families. Given both the budgetary and workload pressures within Children's Social Care, this means that services must be prioritised for those children that the local authority has a statutory duty to support.

Children and families supported

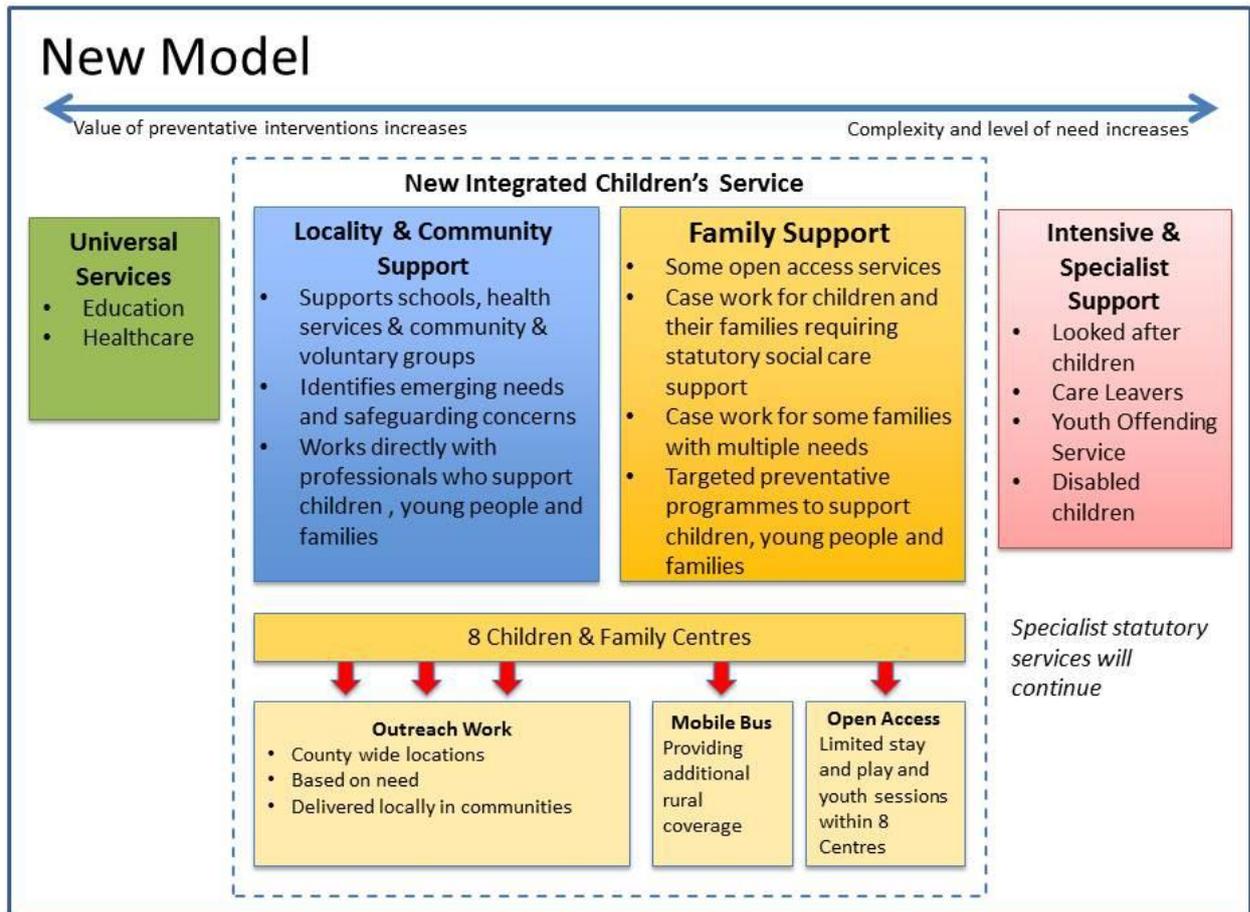
37. The new service will prioritise support to those children the local authority has a statutory duty to support. These are children on child protection plans, looked

after children in the care of the local authority and children in need as defined by the Children Act 1989

38. There will be limited capacity within the Service, however, to provide some targeted support to prevent needs escalating. This will be directed to vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training, and children and their families who have multiple needs. These children and families will be identified through an early help/CAF assessment and will include, for example, families affected by domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health concerns, including post-natal depression, children who are going missing from home and school, and families where there is criminal activity.
39. In addition to the statutory and targeted support, open access services will be available to children and families living in the most deprived areas of Oxfordshire delivered out of the new Children and Family Centres. For example, stay and play and youth sessions.
40. The new service will also have capacity to support professionals working with vulnerable children and families within community-based/universal services, including health, education and early years providers. Experienced child protection professionals will co-ordinate work, support professionals working with children and families and provide specialist safeguarding advice to ensure children are safe

Structure of service

41. The new service will comprise of a number of different elements:
- i) Locality and Community Support
 - ii) Family Support for children aged 0-19, and their families
 - iii) 8 Children and Family Centres and mobile bus
 - iv) Outreach service
42. The diagram below provides an illustration of the new service, with the elements outlined in a dotted line showing the new integrated service.



Locality and Community Support

43. The aim of the Locality and Community Support Service is to:
- To provide advice and guidance to universal services, including schools, health services and voluntary and community groups to enable them to support vulnerable children, young people and families within their community
 - To identify emerging needs and safeguarding concerns within the locality
 - To be the first point of contact for universal services who have concerns about a child and are considering making a referral to statutory services
 - To monitor and oversee the effective implementation of CAF/TACs within the locality
 - To develop a good working knowledge of support services in the area and identification of appropriate resources
44. This new service will build on the work previously carried out by locality coordinators and the current well respected model of locality support. The service will have identified workers who link with universal services, including schools, early years settings, health and other community based provision, to enable concerns to be shared and advice and guidance given in relation to children and young people where there may be child protection issues.
45. Workers from the service will offer support and advice to any professional who has concerns about a child and coordinate support for vulnerable families within the community. This will include supporting the completion of an early help/CAF

assessment to identify the nature of concerns within the family. Where concerns cannot be managed within the community, workers from the service will take the lead in escalating concerns into the new Service. In addition, the service will offer support to build capacity among community groups looking to establish services in their localities.

46. The Locality and Community Support Service will be organised into three area teams (North, Central and South), with workers being based across the Children and Family Centres located in their areas. The Service will be managed by Team Manager, with Senior Practitioners and Locality Workers based within each of the three areas (North, Central and South). All staff will be experienced child protection and safeguarding professionals, with the Senior Practitioners being qualified social workers. The intention is to develop the Locality and Community Service into a multi-agency service. Discussions are on-going with partners regarding this. Staff within the service will work extended hours to ensure support is available to children and families when they require it.
47. The local authority believes that the creation of this service provides a significant preventative element and mitigates some of the concerns raised in the consultation about the early identification of vulnerable families. Through this service vulnerable children will be identified, and support put in place, before concerns escalate. The development of this service increases investment in the support the county council currently provides to universal services.

Family Support

48. The new Family Support Service will integrate the existing Children's Social Care family support teams with the family support functions currently undertaken in the early intervention service, including those of the current Thriving Families and Youth Engagement and Opportunities Teams.
49. The aim of the service is:
- To provide timely support and interventions to vulnerable families to address safeguarding concerns and reduce risks to children and young people
 - To provide case work to children, young people and families requiring statutory and targeted support, including responding to crises within families
 - To offer a range of group programmes to children, young people and families who meet the threshold for the service
 - To deliver and co-ordinate services within the designated Children and Family Centres
 - To provide both casework and group programmes through outreach to venues other than the Children and Family Centres
50. The service will provide direct case work with both children and their families, taking a whole family approach to planning and support. This approach will embed that of the current Thriving Families programme and will ensure plans for children are made within the context of their whole family, enabling appropriate support to be put in place for each individual.
51. In addition to case work, the service will offer a standardised evidence based range of group programmes. These will be designed to address the key risks

and issues affecting families, including domestic abuse, parenting skills, school readiness and employment and training support. The service will only provide programmes where there is strong evidence of their positive impact for children and/or families.

52. The group programmes will be targeted at vulnerable families. However, the Family Support Service will also offer open access sessions within the new Children and Family Centres. This will include a stay and play sessions for under 5s and their carers, and youth sessions for young people.
53. The Family Support Service will be based and operated from the Children and Family Centres, however workers from the Service will provide an extensive outreach service, meeting children and families at other venues including their home, school and other locations close to where the family live to provide individual support. In addition, the group programmes will be offered from venues other than the Children and Family Centres in order to ensure families do not have to travel extensive distances to attend them. The proposals around outreach are included to mitigate some of the concerns raised during the public consultation about accessibility of services, in particular to the more rural areas of Oxfordshire.
54. Teams will develop strong links with the services in the local vicinity, in particular schools, health, and voluntary and community services. In addition, there are opportunities to further develop this service to broaden the range of professionals working within the teams and discussions continue with partners regarding this.
55. The Family Support Service will be organised into three area teams, each managed and overseen by a senior manager reporting to a Deputy Director. Teams will consist of managers, practice managers, senior practitioners, social workers, family workers and family support workers bringing a range of experience and expertise to work with children and families. Managers will have responsibility for a number of different teams, with the majority of workers supporting children and families where there is a statutory responsibility to do so. However, a number of workers will focus on the provision of targeted support to families identified through the early help/CAF assessment process. Practice Managers will have day to day responsibility for the management of case work with families, with the other team members providing direct support to children and families and delivering group programmes. Staff within the service will work extended hours to ensure support is available to children and families when they require it.
56. The development of the integrated service will increase capacity to support the most vulnerable children and focus resources on children in need to prevent a further escalation of their needs.

Children and Family Centres

57. Eight Children and Family Centres will be created providing a base for a service for 0-19 year olds and their families.
58. These Centres will be based in the most deprived areas of Oxfordshire as follows:

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

Methodology used to identify locations

59. The process for determining the proposed locations for the new Children and Family Centres was as follows:
- i) Define the total number of Children and Family Centres within Oxfordshire
 - ii) 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 - north, central, south)
 - iii) Determine the 'ideal' locations of the proposed Children and Family Centres within each service area
60. The approach built on that undertaken by the Cabinet Advisory Group and used the following data sets:
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD);
 - 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.
61. In order to determine the 'ideal' locations within each service area an assumption was made that the main settlements within the county were likely to be the most appropriate locations for the 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 was tested using an algorithm that considered the location of 'need' using the data sets described above. These indicators were weighted by population forecasts to give a better indication of where need is likely to be located in the coming years.
62. Potential locations were tested to determine whether each increased or decreased the distance between Centre and family 'in need'. Locations were finally chose based on a mix of factors: settlement size, deprivation (IMD), and other indicators of need.
63. Since the previous report to Cabinet on 15 September 2015, updated Index of Multiple Deprivation data has been released. The methodology set out above has

been re-run using this updated data and the 'ideal' locations identified were broadly similar.

64. Full details of the methodology used to determine locations was made available as part of the public consultation and is provided in Annex 2.

Buildings suitable for Children and Family Centres

65. Work has begun to identify local authority buildings that could be suitable for a Children and Family Centre and have capacity to house the new integrated Service and its associated functions. While further, more detailed, work is required before finalising the exact location of each Centre the table below shows those identified following the preliminary review:

Area	Locality	Building identified through preliminary review
North	Banbury	Banbury Early Intervention Hub, Hilton Road
	Bicester	Bicester Early Intervention Hub, The Courtyard, Launton Road
	Witney	West Oxfordshire Early Intervention Hub, Witan Way
Central	Barton/ Sandhills	The Roundabout Centre, Waynflete Road, Barton
	Rose Hill/ Littlemore	Rose Hill and Littlemore Children's Centre, Ashhurst Way, Rose Hill
	Blackbird Leys	Leys Children's Centre, Cuddesdon Way
South	Abingdon	Abingdon Early Intervention Hub, The Net, Stratton Way
	Didcot	Didcot Early Intervention Hub, The Vibe, Park Road

66. In addition to the eight Children and Family Centres, a mobile bus service will deliver services to rural communities and the traveller community as they are less likely to attend the main Centres.

67. During the public consultation suggestions were received as to which buildings could be suitable for the Children and Family Centres. These proposals will be considered as part of the more detailed work to finalise the buildings.

Outreach

68. An outreach service will be provided to all parts of Oxfordshire which will help those families who most need intensive support. This will be provided in two ways, firstly workers from the Family Support Service will travel to meet children and families at other venues, including their home, school and other locations close to where the family live to provide 1:1 support. In addition, targeted group programmes will be offered from alternative venues such as local community centres, which will include the more rural parts of the County, in order to ensure families do not have to travel extensive distances to attend them. This will ensure we offer support to vulnerable families and children on a county wide basis.

Role of partners

69. Universal services are accessible to all children and families regardless of need. They have a key role in identifying children and families who are in need of additional support and providing information and advice to these families. The local authority is committed to working with partners across universal, and targeted services, including health, education, employment and the voluntary and community sectors to provide services to support families. The eight Children and Family Centres will provide a venue for partners to deliver services to children and families.
70. It should be noted that a wide range of related services remain outside the scope of these proposals. These include GP services, maternity services, health visiting and school health nurse services. These services will continue to work to identify and support families on important issues such as post-natal depression and breastfeeding according to need.

Child care settings

71. Eleven of the current Children's Centres offer child care on the same site. These are:
- East Street Centre, Calder Close, Banbury, OX16 3WR
 - The Sunshine Centre, Edmunds Road, Banbury, OX16 0PJ
 - North Banbury Centre, Hardwick School, Ferriston, OX16 1XE
 - Britannia Road Centre, Grove Street, Banbury, OX16 5DN
 - The Ace Centre, Burford Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5DZ
 - Slade Children's Centre, Titup Hall Drive, Wood Farm, Oxford, OX3 8QQ
 - East Oxford Children's Centre, The Union, Collins Street, Oxford OX4 1EE
 - Grandpoint Children's Centre, 47 Whitehouse Road, OX1 4QH
 - Rosehill Littlemore Children's Centre, Ashhurst Way, Rose Hill, OX4 4RF
 - Elms Road Children's Centre, Elms Road, Botley, OX2 9JZ
 - Stephen Freeman Children's Centre, Freeman Road, Didcot, OX11 7BZ

72. It is proposed to continue to support these child care settings until April 2017 with a view to them being financially self-sufficient from April 2017. Supporting these settings will provide a base for the outreach work that will be delivered in those communities. The local authority will also work with these settings to support the delivery of some universal services from the buildings, this could include health visiting services.

Future use of other buildings

73. Throughout the public consultation, the local authority has had discussions with groups, including parents, district, town and parish councils to explore the continued use of buildings that cease to be funded by the Service. A framework has been established to inform this work and the local authority is committed to continuing this work over the coming months.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment

74. When a professional or member of the public has safeguarding concerns about a child they make a referral to Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

(MASH). This co-located multi-professional team aims to identify risks to vulnerable children, at the earliest possible stage by providing a safe and speedy triage to determine the most effective interventions. As such it is a gateway between universal services (such as Schools and GPs) and statutory services e.g. police and social care. Where concerns meet the threshold for statutory social care services, workers within the MASH liaise with one of the three area Children and Family Assessment Teams who undertake a full assessment of the child's needs and put in place a plan to address them and reduce the risks to the child.

75. Under the new service structure the Locality and Community Support Service will become the first point of contact for professionals who have concerns about a child, except where there are immediate safeguarding concerns. Given this it is necessary to review the role of the MASH, and the number of workers required to deliver it. This work, involving all agencies who are partners in the MASH, has commenced and will be presented to Cabinet in a future report as part of a wider report.

Emergency Duty Team

76. The local authority currently provides an emergency out of hours' service which provides support to vulnerable adults and children. Due to organisational changes taking place within children and adult social care a review of the current out of hours' arrangements is underway. It is proposed that any resultant changes to this service are implemented following a consultation process with staff.

Equalities Implications

77. See Service and Community Impact Assessment in Annex 3.

Financial and Staffing Implications

78. The budget agreed by Council in February 2014 included savings of £3m in Early Intervention to be achieved by 2017-18. Further savings of £3m were agreed by Council in February 2015 making a total of £6m to be achieved by 2017-18.

79. The Service & Resource Planning 2016/17 report presented to Cabinet on 26 January 2016 sets out budget proposals for 2016-17 to 2019-20 which will be considered by Council on 16 February 2016. Council needs to make further savings beyond those in the existing Medium Term Financial Plan to reflect the implications of spending reductions announced in the National Budgets in both March and July 2015, and also the provisional local government finance settlement announced on 17 December 2015. An additional £23m of savings on top of the previous estimate of £50 million will need to be identified in future years. As a consequence, it is likely that the additional £2 million savings from the Early Intervention budget that were consulted on will be required. However, this is subject to a decision made by Council on 16 February 2016 in setting the 2016/17 budget and future Medium Term Financial Plan.

80. The existing budgets for the service areas that are proposed to be combined are set out in the table below:

Service Area	2015-16 Net Budget * £m
Early Intervention Hubs	5.8
Children's Centres	7.7
Youth, Engagement & Opportunities	1.5
Thriving Families	0.2
Less: Pay budget / Vacancy factor saving share	-0.2
Sub-total – Early Intervention *	15.0
Add: Budgets for Family Support Teams	4.0
Total Budget for Combined Service before savings	19.0
Further Savings agreed for 2016-17 to 2017-18	-5.0
Potential additional savings	-2.0
Revised Total Budget for Combined Service	12.0m
* The 2015-16 net budget has already been reduced by £1m of the original £6m planned savings	

81. The new service model, is based on the available budget of £12m and the assumptions in the table below. The available staffing budget determines the number of staff/ teams that are affordable in the new structure and the number of potential centres:

Budget Assumptions	£m
Continued delivery of Education, Employment and Training responsibilities	0.7
Estimated Premises costs & other supplies and services	1.5
Amount available for staffing	9.8
Total Available Budget for Combined Service	12.0

82. Any transitional support to child care settings will need to be found from the Service budget, potentially delaying the achievement of the full savings.

83. It is expected that by reducing the number of locations where existing services are delivered, there will be potential for alternative use of sites. However, there is a risk that some capital grant funding associated with some sites may need to be repaid.

84. Some capital work is expected to be required to make existing sites suitable for use as locations for the new Children and Family Centres, at an indicative cost of £1.9 million. The initial budget provision of £1.9m will be funded from corporate resources held within the capital programme. Depending on the outcome of the programme, the capital programme could be reimbursed from the disposal of residual county council sites and any savings on alternative use of residual sites that address budget provision already earmarked in the capital programme.

Redundancies

85. These proposals will result in significant levels of redundancies. While exact numbers, and the specific posts affected, cannot yet be confirmed it is estimated that over 200 staff employed by Oxfordshire County Council, and within Children's

Centres managed by schools, are likely to be affected. The county council will support staff to seek alternative employment opportunities with the local authority, however, these are likely to be limited as all Directorates are implementing savings plans.

Commissioned Services

86. The county council currently commission a number of organisations to provide services on its behalf within the Early Intervention Service. These include contracts for the management of 15 Children's Centres, to smaller contracts for work with groups or individuals. A number of the smaller contracts will cease from April 2016, while those for the provision of Children's Centres will continue until September 2016. Where providers are running Children's Centres on behalf of the local authority, discussions are on-going to ascertain what, if any, responsibilities the county council may have to the staff within these services.

Legal Implications

87. The report to Cabinet on 15 September 2015, "Future Arrangements in Children's Social Care" set out the legal duties incumbent on the local authority in relation to Children's Centres. These are provided in Annex 4 and Annex 5.

Meeting legal responsibilities

88. The county council believes that the proposed new model of service meets the requirements placed on the local authority as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and statutory guidance:

- *take steps to identify parents and those expecting a baby in their area who are unlikely to take advantage of early childhood services available and encourage them to use them*

The Service will continue to receive notifications of all new born children and will work with health professionals to identify all those that are vulnerable and ensure the appropriate support is provided.

- *ensure there are sufficient children's centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need*

In developing the new Service, the priority has been to maximise the number of staff available to provide services, including outreach, to children and families; maximise the use of the proposed Children and Family Centres; and minimise the proportion of the budget spent on buildings. By doing this the new Service will be able to meet the needs of vulnerable families across Oxfordshire.

- *A network of Children's Centres accessible to all families with young children in their area*

It is intended that the eight proposed Children and Family Centres will be located across Oxfordshire in the most deprived areas of the county. However, through a partnership with health that delivers a universal offer, including antenatal and post-natal support, families from across the county will have access to services delivered from the Children and Family Centres. In addition,

sessions will be run from each Centre which will be open to any family wishing to attend.

- *Children's Centres and their services within reasonable reach of all families with young children in urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport*
- *demonstrate that all children and families can be reached effectively*

The methodology used to identify the locations of the Children and Family Centres, includes an assumption that the main settlements within Oxfordshire were likely to be the most appropriate locations for the Children and Family Centres because of their geographical spread and accessibility in terms of transport links. This was tested by a further calculation that took into account travelling time to the proposed Centres and minimised the average distance between each Centre and families 'in need'.

Further, the new service will provide outreach across Oxfordshire and a mobile bus service, meaning that children and families will not have to travel to the Centres in order to receive service.

- *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*

Strong partnership working is a key part of the new model of service. Health services provide a universal services from antenatal support onwards. Their role is to identify vulnerable families and ensure families receive the appropriate support. Through our model of integrated working workers from the new service will work closely with health professionals so families receive the right support at the right time.

Support around employment forms a key part of the Trouble Families agenda, by integrating this provision into the new service, families will receive continue to receive advice and support enabling them to take advantage of employment and training opportunities.

The Locality and Community Support Service, will provide a co-ordinated response to identifying and directing resources towards vulnerable families The ambition is that this team will be multi-agency and work in communities alongside universal services particularly schools, early years settings and Health to identify vulnerable families as soon as problems first emerge and ensure the family receives appropriate support. Where targeted / specialist support is required referrals will be made into the appropriate service.

- *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*

The new service will target those children and families in greatest need and prioritise the available resources for them. Services will be provided from the

Children and Family Centres, whose location in the most deprived areas of the County was determined through a needs analysis, and by outreach services that will offer both 1:1 and group support at venues across the Oxfordshire.

- *ensure that opening times and availability of services meet the needs of families in their area*

Staff within the new service will operate extended hours to ensure support is available to children and families when they most need it. In addition, the new service will have strong links with the Emergency Duty Team, and other county council teams to ensure appropriate support is available across the week.

- *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;*

Children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being will continue to be supported by universal services provided by health, education and other professionals. The Locality and Community Support Service will develop strong links with universal provider within the local area, enabling vulnerable children to be identified and where necessary targeted services put in place to support them.

Services provided by Children's Social Care will continue to be available to protect children from harm and neglect. There will continue to be a clear referral process into safeguarding services to ensure children are protected.

Ensuring that children are ready for school is a key function of Children's Centres and this will remain a priority in the proposed new model of service. Through the targeting of services to those most in need, support will continue to be available to children to prepare them for starting school. Through the continued provision of support throughout childhood, the service will prepare vulnerable children to take advantage of the opportunities offered by education, training and recreation.

- *take into account the views of local families and communities in deciding what is sufficient Children's Centre provision*

Local families and communities have been invited to give their views through the public consultation process. These have been taken into account in shaping the new service and where concerns have been raised we have adapted features of the new model to mitigate these.

- *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*

Due to financial and service pressures within the County, the Children and Family Centres will provide targeted and statutory services to children and families living within Oxfordshire. Where universal providers, such as health, are delivering services from the new Centres some of these services may remain accessible to families living within other local authorities, where it is appropriate for them to do so.

- *take into account wider duties under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and under the Child Poverty Act 2010*

These duties will be met by targeting services to children and families the local authority has a statutory duty to support.

Implementation

89. The work to restructure the Directorate is complex and will take a number of months. The current timetable for implementation is as follows:

23 February 2015	Report to Cabinet
April 2015	Commence staff consultation on the staffing structure for the new service
Summer 2015	Staff interviews and confirmation of posts within new structure
By late Autumn 2015	Integrated service commences within new Children and Family Centres
By April 2017	Work with 10 child care settings around sustainability
On-going	Work with interested groups regarding continued use of buildings not funded by the Service

Recommendations

90. Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:

- That eight Children and Family Centres are developed in the locations set out in the report. These Centres will deliver services that meet the authority's statutory duties relating to Children's Centres and deliver statutory and targeted services to vulnerable children and families
- That limited open access services are provided from within the eight Children and Family Centres
- A mobile bus is retained to deliver services to rural communities and the traveller community as these communities are less likely to attend the main centres
- To continue to support the child care settings currently based in Children's Centres through to April 2017. During this time the authority will work with the centres to ensure they are financially self-sufficient from April 2017.
- Approve the inclusion of £1.9m budget in the capital programme for the new Children and Family Centres to be funded from the unallocated corporate resources.
- Commit to continue conversations with organisations and groups that have shown an interest in using alternative funding streams to enable centres to remain open

CA6c

- Commence a staff consultation on the staffing structure for the new Service, to include proposals for an Emergency Duty Team.

JIM LEIVERS
Director for Children's Services

February 2016

Appendix 1 - Public consultation activities

The council received 2,715 responses to the children's services consultation and engaged with over 850 people at meetings and events.

The consultation ran between Wednesday 14 October 2015 and Sunday 10 January 2016, and comprised of:

Online consultation

All consultation documents were published on the council's consultation website, including a link to an online questionnaire and a suite of supporting information available to read online or download. The website url was publicised in printed materials, adverts, press releases and linked to in social media posts on the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Online consultation included:

- Consultation document and summary explaining the reason for the consultation and three proposed options for a new 0-19 service model
- Questionnaire with guidance notes available to complete online or print and return by freepost
- Profile of each Children's Centre and Early Intervention Hub
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Summary documents translated into seven languages with further available on request
- Information on how to request consultation documents in an alternative format
- An email address and helpline number were also publicised

Printed consultation materials

- Paper copies of the consultation documents and questionnaires made available at Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs (and for onward distribution to service users), at County Hall, in libraries and at the public consultation events and stakeholder meetings
- Posters were displayed in/around Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs
- Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs gave out copies of the consultation information and questionnaire to service users via one to one, group sessions and focus groups
- Picture explanation of the proposed new model was made available for use in focus groups with young people

Events, meetings and community visits

- 146 attended public meetings held in Oxford, Didcot and Bicester. Council representatives explained the consultation, heard views from the public on the proposed options for a new 0-19 service model and answered questions
- 433 people attended eight stakeholder events, held in a workshop format, which explained the consultation and the proposed options for the new model, asked stakeholders questions and recorded feedback on the proposed new

model. Attendees included representatives from Children's Centre Advisory Groups, Early Intervention Hubs, parents, health, schools, faith, voluntary sector and justice partners

- 183 staff attended three staff listening events
- 21 focus groups held at Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs with parents and young people in December 2015 and January 2016
- One of these focus groups, held at Abingdon Early Intervention Hub, involved young people from TOPAZ, representing lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender young people across Oxfordshire
- Meetings held with local travellers communities in Wheatley and Redbridge
- Meetings held with schools to identify options for future use of buildings.
- Meetings held with education, health, district councils and voluntary sector stakeholders to discuss the proposed new model
- Meetings held with representatives from Churches, including the Bishop of Dorchester, to discuss the potential contribution of faith groups to the proposed new model
- Visits to Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs by members of the CAG and Leader of the Council.

Service user engagement

Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs supported the consultation process by raising awareness with service users and providing any assistance necessary to aid their participation. Activities included:

- Discussions in team meetings for staff to then discuss the consultation with service users in 1:1 sessions and in group activities (e.g. open access sessions)
- Promotion of consultation on their Facebook pages
- Gathered feedback from youth club service users 8-12 year olds and 13-19 year olds via flip charts at youth club sessions
- Gathered feedback via Christmas community event from parents and young people
- Included details on the consultation in newsletters and mailings to service users and in schools newsletters and local publications
- Facilitated a meeting between Councillors and parents
- Held discussions with health partners who then were able to speak to service users
- 21 focus groups held at Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs with parents and young people in December 2015 and January 2016

Stakeholder briefings

Representatives from the following stakeholder groups were directly informed about the consultation through newsletter articles and email briefings:

- Oxfordshire County Councillors
- District Council Chief Executives
- Oxfordshire Parish and Town Councils
- Oxfordshire MPs

CA6c

- Voluntary and community organisations
- Commissioned service delivery partners
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Early Years Board
- Oxfordshire schools
- Academics
- Staff

Other stakeholder communications included:

- Presentation on the consultation made at all elected member locality meetings
- Letter sent to all Members to encourage them to be actively involved in the consultation process by participating in their local stakeholder event
- Post-public meetings communications with stakeholders included:
 - Media article by Cllr Tilley summarising feedback thus far, addressing key concerns raised and encouraging continued input into consultation, published 10/12/15, Oxford Mail
 - Stakeholder email briefing with key facts summary sent 10/12/15 to above stakeholder list

Publicity

The consultation was publicised throughout the county via posters in Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs, digital communications (news stories on the council's website and social media channels), paid for advertising in local newspapers (Henley Standard, Banbury Guardian, The Oxford Times, The Oxford Mail, The Herald Series, and Bicester Advertiser) and PR (media releases and articles).

Through these channels information was provided on the public meetings and how to take part in the consultation. In addition, the council also directly informed representatives from key stakeholder groups about the consultation in briefings and newsletters. Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs publicised the consultation on their Facebook pages, in newsletters and emails to service users.