

Haringey Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 8th June 2011

Report Title: Children's Centres in Haringey – the Call-in of a decision taken by the Lead Member for Children & Young People on 18 May 2011

Report of: Peter Lewis, Director of Children & Young People's Service

PR

Jan Doust

Contact Officer : Jan Doust, Deputy Director - Prevention & Early Intervention

Email: jan.doust@haringey.gov.uk

Tel: 0208 489 3150

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: Key Decision

1. Purpose of the report (That is, the decision required)

1.1. To respond to matters raised in the call-in of the report

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

2.1. N/A

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

3.1. The plans reflect the Council Plan vision set out in strategic priority 3 to "Encourage lifetime well being". The proposals address this priority by seeking to ensure there is integrated, good quality early childhood service provision available from the earliest point in a child's life.

3.2. To support the delivery of the Children's Trust Preventative Strategy and Child Poverty Strategy and to provide a sound basis for early intervention across all services.

3.3. In addition, the proposals link to the Children and Young People's Plan 2009 - 2020 priorities set out below;

Priority 1 – to improve health and well-being throughout life

Priority 3 – to improve safeguarding and child protection

Priority 4 – develop positive human relationships and ensure personal safety

Priority 5 – develop sustainable schooling and services with high expectations of young people

Priority 6 – engender lifelong learning for all across a broad range of subjects both in and out of school

Priority 10 – Empower families and communities

3.4. The proposals also link with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy - 2007-2016, in particular the outcomes;

-Economic vitality and prosperity shared by all

- Safer for all

- Healthier people with a better quality of life.

3.5. The proposals have clear links to the Council's Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2011, namely;

Objectives 1: Addressing worklessness and increasing parental employment in sustainable jobs

Objective 2: Improving the take-up of benefits and tax credits

Objective 3: Reducing educational attainment gaps for children in poverty

4. Recommendations

4.1. That the decision of the Cabinet Member to agree the recommendations set out in the report on children's centres of 18 May 2011 be upheld.

5. Reason for recommendation(s)

5.1. As set out in the report to the Lead Member for Children and Young People on Children's Centres in Haringey.

6. Other options considered

6.1. As set out in the report to the Lead Member for Children and Young People on Children's Centres in Haringey.

7. Response to Reasons for Call-in and Variation of Action proposed

7.1. The call-in request is attached as Appendix 1. That document contains an acknowledgement that the proposals are 'considered to be inside the policy and budget framework' but then lists six reasons for requesting call-in and four proposed variations to the proposed action. These are set out and addressed in the following paragraphs.

A) Whilst understanding the requirement that the Council has to reduce spending as a result of the wider reductions in government grant and increased pressure on some Council services, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should re-examine Cabinet's decision to close Children's Centres in Highgate, North Bank, Rokesly and Tower Gardens.

7.2. The report sets out a decision to withdraw funding from Highgate, North Bank and Rokesly children's centres, rather than closure. We are considering alternative options for the continuation of some services at each of these sites; in particular the provision of access to health services.

7.3. The report also sets out a decision to end funding to the children's centre link site located at 100 Tower Gardens road. The site has been linked to Rowland Hill Children's Centre and serves the community of White Hart Lane ward. Access to children's centre services will continue from the main children's centre at Rowland Hill. Given the reductions in overall grant funding, it was felt that there would be a greater scope to meet children's needs by maintaining the designated centre rather than stretching resources too thinly across a single ward.

B) The closure of Children's Centres is contrary:

- *To objectives of Haringey's Children's Trust and its Preventative Strategy and*
- *To the Council's Children and Young People's plan (CYPP) 2009-12 which all place great emphasis on early intervention. Priority 4 of the CYPP 'Stay Safe' is to:*
"Deepen integration of systems and processes that promote early intervention, prevention and the delivery of locally based services."

- *To the observations of the Munro Review (April 2011) which says:*

"Preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services" and that Councils should "secure sufficient provision of early help services for children, young people and families"

7.4. The model set out in the report seeks to meet the objectives of the Council's Children and Young People's plan and Haringey's Children's Trust and its preventative strategy in the face of a significant cut to the grant funding available to support children's centres in Haringey. Priority has been given to the most vulnerable children and ensuring that they and their families are able

to access children's centre services. There is a strong focus on prevention and early intervention with the continuation of children's centre outreach and family support teams. We are continuing our close working with midwifery and health visiting services ensuring the links with universal services and the early identification of vulnerable children remain strong.

C) Early Intervention services should not be the target for cuts which will only create problems, social and financial, in the long-term. The National Children's Plan say that:

"It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later."

"Early intervention and prevention are key areas to focus on improving, in order to address the high levels of demand for acute services."

7.5. The Early Intervention Grant replaced a number of previously ring-fenced grants provided to the council to support the delivery of the early years, children's centre and children and young peoples services. Haringey's allocation of £15,748,000 for 2011-12 represented an overall reduction in the total of all previous grant funding of £4,534,783.

7.6. To mitigate the impact of Council reductions to the grant allocation attributed to children's centres and early years, priority is being given to the early identification of need and a model for service delivery focused on prevention and early intervention. We have therefore concentrated on an overall package of early intervention and prevention and high-end social care services.

D) Not only will long-term costs increase but the outcomes for children will be worse if Children's Centres close. Haringey's Children's Trust Prevention Strategy says:

"If we do not invest sufficient resources into prevention and early intervention, the more likely it is that at risk and vulnerable children and young people will have increasing dependence on high cost and long-term interventions."

7.7. Reductions to the level and scope of services available through our children's centres are inevitable as a result of significant cuts to funding. However, maintaining the presence of universal health services across our children's centres will support the early identification of need.

7.8. The delivery model for children's centres, moving forward, will set out clear pathways from identification to intervention ensuring that, through partnership with universal services such as midwifery and health visiting, there can be a degree of mitigation against the effect of reducing levels of children's centres service delivery in Haringey.

E) *The Council may be open to costly and lengthy legal proceedings if it is to be seen to neglect its legal duty in the Children's Act*

7.9. We have assumed here that that the reference here to the Children's Act actually relates to the most relevant legislation, the Childcare Act 2006 and the Children Act 2004.

7.10. The decision taken complied with the Council's standing orders in that it was taken in the light of appropriate legal advice. The comments of the Head of Legal Services were included in the report to the Lead Member and specifically state that:

"The report sets out the consultation process that has taken place and demonstrates that the Council has complied with its consultation duty. The proposed way forward for the children's centre service set out in the report meets the duties of the Council under Sections 5A and 5E of the 2006 Act."

7.11. The sections referred to above contain the primary duties of the local authority in ensuring provision of children centre services.

7.12. In addition, the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, clarified Section 3 (2) of the Childcare Act 2006, providing that:

Arrangements made by an English local authority under section 3(2) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, include arrangements for sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need.

7.13. The proposals do set out arrangements to continue to meet local need and in particular to prioritise the needs of the most deprived children and families, despite the need to make substantial savings.

F) *The Children's Centre consultation failed to provide an opportunity for centres, families and individuals to respond effectively as it failed to provide clear information on costs and alternative delivery methods. This is shown in the lack of change in the funding*

7.14. There were extensive opportunities for parents and carers and stakeholders to take part in the consultation via consultation meetings held across the Borough, tailored questionnaires which were available on-line and in children's centres, as well as opportunities to write to us directly. All were asked to comment on the proposal set out in the consultation document and addendum, as well as to put forward their own alternative proposals. These alternatives were considered as part of the analysis and decision making

process and contributed to the shift from the original proposal to what was set out in the Children's Centres in Haringey report.

7.15. It was unlikely that funding levels would change as the budget attributed to the delivery of children's centres was determined as part of a wider package of savings across the Children and Young People's Service. Any change in funding would have had an impact elsewhere in the service. This point is addressed in more detail below.

G) The Council's proposals have failed to consider the relative deprivation in all wards and ascertain whether the service is reaching the children in each area in most need.

7.16. This is not the case. In establishing the proposed model for future delivery with a significantly reduced budget, priority has been given to maintaining a greater volume of children's centre services in areas of higher deprivation. Whilst it is recognised that there are pockets of disadvantage and vulnerable children in our more affluent parts of the borough, it is clear that the levels of deprivation are concentrated to a greater degree in the areas where the model proposes to maintain funding to children's centres. A copy of the most recent Index of Multiple Deprivation, mapped onto Haringey, is attached as Appendix 2.

7.17. Our continued close partnership working with midwifery and health visiting as key universal services, will continue to provide scope for the early identification of need and subsequent intervention. In addition to this information about the children most in need, who should be accessing children's centres is provided through close liaison between children's social care and children's centres services. This is being strengthened by the current programme to roll-out access to the Framework I database system.

Variation of action proposed

A) Whilst understanding the need to target more of the reduced resources at deprived areas the model proposed fails to consider need across the entire borough and residents living in pockets of deprivation in wealthier areas which the Council still has a duty to provide for. For this reason the Council should reconsider plans to close Children's centres.

7.18. The consideration of need across the entire borough is reflected by the provision of some of our key early years services across Haringey and not just within the designated centres. Universal services such as midwifery and health visiting operate across the Borough and will continue to work in partnership with children's centres to identify, support and sign-post families to

appropriate services. The universal offer of early education for 3 and 4 year olds, targeted childcare places, the 2 year old offer and the provision of outreach and family support will continue to support need across the borough.

7.19. The model set in the report proposes the withdrawal of grant funding to three children's centres rather than closure. Discussions have taken place with all of these centres and alternative options are being considered for the maintenance of some services in the absence of grant funding. The cluster model will introduce greater flexibility and support the deployment of resources where they are needed most.

B) The Children and Young People Service (CYPS) should consider a reduction in its overall budget to ensure that all Children's Centres remain open.

7.20. Taking account of corporately held provision for slippage against savings between years, CYPS has identified savings of £10.6m in 2011-12 £5.8m in 2012-13 and a further £0.7m in 2013-14. These savings proposals have been made against a need to provide additional resources of £7.4m in 2011-12 in order to accommodate demographic pressures already being seen in safeguarding services during 2010-11 and continuing into 2011-12.

7.21. Assumptions about the ability to reduce these costs in later years have already been factored into the medium term financial plan and are reflected in the figures above. The savings identified already in CYPS fall largely outside of safeguarding services which, as described above, have needed additional resources.

7.22. The savings proposals already agreed have had the effect of removing two of the existing Business Units (School Standards and Inclusion and Business Support and Development) leaving only Children and Families and Prevention and Early Intervention Services Business Units remaining.

C) Funding currently earmarked in the CYPS budget for future demographic changes should be utilised for Children's Centres which are used by children currently living in the borough and for whom the Council has a duty to provide.

7.23. We take this to be a reference to item 8 in Appendix 3 to the report to Cabinet in February 2011 setting out the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan:

8 Demographic pressures – Looked After Children. The number of LAC has continued to increase above the number assumed in the base budget.

7.24. As the notes accompanying this item in that report make clear, this budget provision is 'necessary to cope with the full-year effects of the current number of children in care'. In other words it is not provision for 'future demographic changes' but is the full year effect of actual commitments: children in our care.

D) Differential charging structures and income generation should be explored in all Children's Centres to boost revenue to be spent on these services.

7.25. Discussions are taking place with those Centres where funding will cease, to establish what could still be delivered. All three Centres have indicated that they may introduce charges for some services.

8. Chief Financial Officer Comments

8.1. To the extent that these proposals do not proceed as planned, there are financial risks which are either associated with the non achievement of the savings or slippage of the savings from 2011-12 into 2012-13. The non achievement of savings has potentially serious implications for the Council. The 2011-12 budget has been set on the assumption of savings being delivered in full. Indeed further additional savings are still required in later years.

8.2. The scope for achieving still greater savings in 2011-12, necessary in order to protect Children's Centres at this point of the year would be extremely difficult to realise. Allowing time to identify areas, seek Members agreement, consult and implement savings during 2011-12 is unlikely to yield sufficient resource to impact significantly on the Children Centre proposals and is likely to result in an overspent position in 2011-12.

9. Head of Legal Services Comments

9.1 The statutory duty on the Council in relation to the provision of its Children's Centres is that of sufficiency to meet local need (Section 5A of the Childcare Act 2006). The determination of what is sufficient provision is a decision for local authorities to take ensuring that universal access is achieved, with Children's Centres configured to meet the needs of local families especially the most deprived. The planning of the appropriate number of centres can take into account that a differential in the number of number of children served by a centre can be based on an evaluation of the intensity of need in the relevant areas. The original decision of the Cabinet member was based upon a report that gave due consideration to the Council's statutory duty.

9.2 The Council is also under a statutory duty to consult stakeholders when considering significant changes to services offered through its Children's Centres or the closure of a centre (Section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006). The statutory guidance requires the Authority to provide sufficient information for those being consulted to form a considered view on the matters on which they are being consulted. The decision of the Cabinet member was based on a very full consultation exercise that was set out in detail in the report to her.

10. Equalities & Community Cohesion Comments

10.1. The decision was taken in the light of a full Equalities Impact Assessment as set out in the report to the Lead Member.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Initial proposals were set out in the consultation document and the views of the public were sought during a statutory consultation which took place between 16th March 2011 and 22nd April 2011.
- 12.2 An addendum to the consultation was issued on 5th April 2011. The original consultation proposed that Children's Centre resources would be targeted at the most vulnerable families and those living in areas of highest deprivation. A map of Haringey showing Children's Centres and deprivation bandings were included in the consultation document. We were given legal advice that we should specifically state which Children's Centres would be at risk of closure if we could not sustain them all and the addendum set out the potential changes.
- 12.3 The process of consultation included a series of 13 open meetings hosted by a combination of the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Early Years Champion Member and senior officers and these were attended by parents/carers, staff, governors and other interested parties. Written responses were received through the online questionnaires and other forms of submission.
- 12.4 There were a total of 976 questionnaires submitted – 790 from parents/carers, 57 from Children's Centre staff, 82 from school staff and governors and 47 from partner statutory and voluntary organisations. In addition, 65 emails and letters and a video were also received.
- 12.5 Full details of the consultation and the feedback were set out in a separate report.

12.6 All documents referred to above were included as Appendices to the report to the Lead member.

13 Use of appendices /Tables and photographs

13.2 Appendix 1: Call-in form

13.3 Appendix 2: Index of multiple Deprivation

14 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- The Children's Centres in Haringey report to Lead Member for Children & Young People, lead member Signing 18th May 2011

'CALL IN' OF DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

This form is to be used for the 'calling in' of decisions of the above bodies, in accordance with the procedure set out in Part 4 Section H.2 of the Constitution.

TITLE OF MEETING	Cabinet Member (Children's Services) Signing
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DATE OF MEETING	18 th May 2011
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MINUTE No. AND TITLE OF ITEM	1. Children's Centres in Haringey
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1. Reason for Call-In/Is it claimed to be outside the policy or budget framework?

The proposals are considered to be inside the policy and budget framework but:

- Whilst understanding the requirement that the Council has to reduce spending as a result of the wider reductions in government grant and increased pressure on some Council services, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should re-examine Cabinet's decision to close Children's Centres in Highgate, North Bank, Rokesly and Tower Gardens.
- The closure of Children's Centres is contrary:
 - To objectives of Haringey's Children's Trust and its Preventative Strategy and
 - To the Council's Children and Young People's plan (CYPP) 2009-12 which all place great emphasis on early intervention. Priority 4 of the CYPP 'Stay Safe' is to:

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- To the observations of the Munro Review (April 2011) which says:

"Preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services" and that Council's should "secure sufficient provision of early help services for children, young people and families"

- Early Intervention services should not be the target for cuts which will only create problems, social and financial, in the long-term. The National Children's Plan say that:

"It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later."

As the 2008/09 evaluation of the Children and Young People's plan says:

“Early intervention and prevention are key areas to focus on improving, in order to address the high levels of demand for acute services.”

- Not only will long-term costs increase but the outcomes for children will be worse if Children’s Centres close. Haringey’s Children’s Trust Prevention Strategy says:

“If we do not invest sufficient resources into prevention and early intervention, the more likely it is that at risk and vulnerable children and young people will have increasing dependence on high cost and long-term interventions.”

- The Council may be open to costly and lengthy legal proceedings if it is to be seen to neglect its legal duty in the Children’s Act
- The Children’s Centre consultation failed to provide an opportunity for centres, families and individuals to respond effectively as it failed to provide clear information on costs and alternative delivery methods. This is shown in the lack of change in the funding
- The Council’s proposals have failed to consider the relative deprivation in all wards and ascertain whether the service is reaching the children in each area in most need.

2. Variation of Action Proposed

- Whilst understanding the need to target more of the reduced resources at deprived areas the model proposed fails to consider need across the entire borough and residents living in pockets of deprivation in wealthier areas which the Council still has a duty to provide for. For this reason the Council should reconsider plans to close Children’s centres.
- The Children and Young People Service (CYPS) should consider a reduction in its overall budget to ensure that all Children’s Centres remain open.
- Funding currently earmarked in the CYPS budget for future demographic changes should be utilised for Children’s Centres which are used by children currently living in the borough and for whom the Council has a duty to provide.
- Differential charging structures and income generation should be explored in all Children’s Centres to boost revenue to be spent on these services.

Signed:

Councillor: Karl Reece (Please print name): KATHARINE REECE

Countersigned:

1. Councillor: Rachel Allison (Please print name): RACHEL ALLISON
2. Councillor: Monica Whyte (Please print name): Monica Whyte
3. Councillor: David Schmitz (Please print name): David Schmitz
4. Councillor: Richard Wilson (Please print name): RICHARD WILSON

Date Submitted: 24/5/11

Date Received: 24 May 2011 @ 15.05hrs
(to be completed by the Non Cabinet Committees Manager)

Carroll

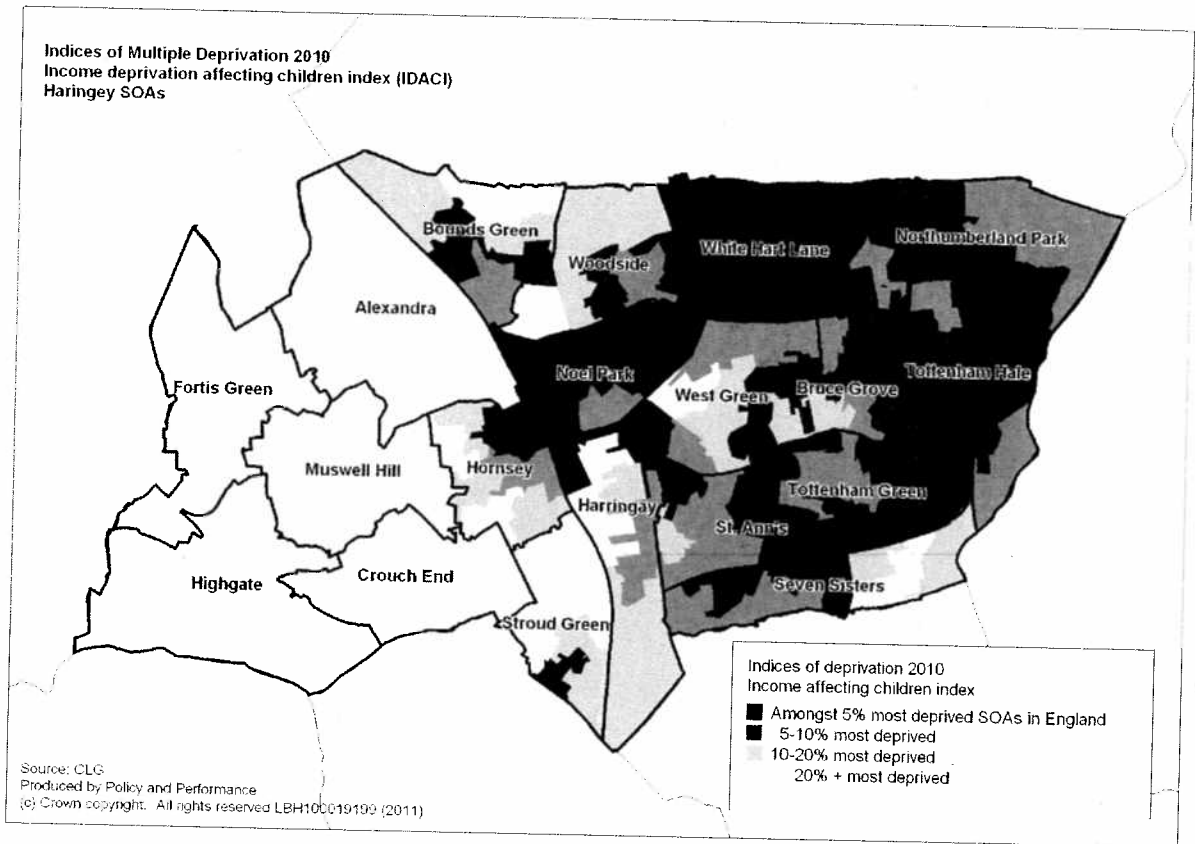
Notes:

1. Please send this form to:
Clifford Hart (on behalf of the Proper Officer)
Non Cabinet Committees Manager
7th Floor
River Park House
225 High Road, Wood Green, London N22 8HQ

Fax: 020 8489 2660
2. This form must be received by the Non Cabinet Committees Manager by 10.00 a.m. on the fifth working day following publication of the minutes.
3. The proper officer will forward all timely and proper call-in requests to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and notify the decision taker and the relevant Director.
4. A decision will be implemented after the expiry of ten working days following the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee's receipt of a call-in request, unless a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee takes place during the 10 day period.
5. If a call-in request claims that a decision is contrary to the policy or budget framework, the Proper Officer will forward the call-in requests to the Monitoring Officer and /or Chief Financial Officer for a report to be prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advising whether the decision does fall outside the policy or budget framework.

Appendix 2: Income Deprivation affecting Children

The map below shows which areas in Haringey are in the most deprived Local Super-Output Areas in England. The darkest shading indicates the worst deprivation rank.



Income - Children Ranks of Output Areas, by Ward

