



Briefing: latest proposals for a new Early Childhood and Family Service, 14th January, 2019

Introduction:

In September 2018, we launched consultation on a new Early Childhood and Family Service. This briefing explains how we have updated our proposals, in light of the consultation responses.

Why we are proposing changes:

- It is seven years since the current contracts were set up and they are now coming to an end. We are taking this opportunity to modernise the service and ensure it reflects current needs and national evidence of what works.
- Despite the concept of Sure Start being 17 years old, national evidence for the impact of a traditional children's centre model is limited. But evidence is stronger where services successfully take an integrated approach to addressing social, economic and challenges in the family home. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on children's centres in 2016 advocated delivering services through wider community venues, engaging with other organisations and providing online support. Many other councils have been remodelling their services along these lines.
- We have been spending £10.2 million per year on 53 children's centres across the county, operated by 12 providers. That is £10 per head higher than the national average and more than most comparable councils do.
- Only 39 per cent of current spend - £4.02m - is on frontline delivery, as opposed to management, administration and running costs. This means we are only spending 39p per pound on frontline delivery. There is, currently, a lack of clarity on the outcomes that spending achieves.
- At the moment, only 35 per cent of children's centre group sessions are targeted on those most vulnerable and 65 per cent are universal, or available to all.
- Some centres are purpose-built, some are just a room in another building. Opening times vary. Many families only use them a few times a year and some families – up to 25 per cent in the most deprived areas – don't use them at all.



- Norfolk is a huge county of more than 2,000 square miles. Currently, only 20 per cent of group sessions are delivered through outreach.

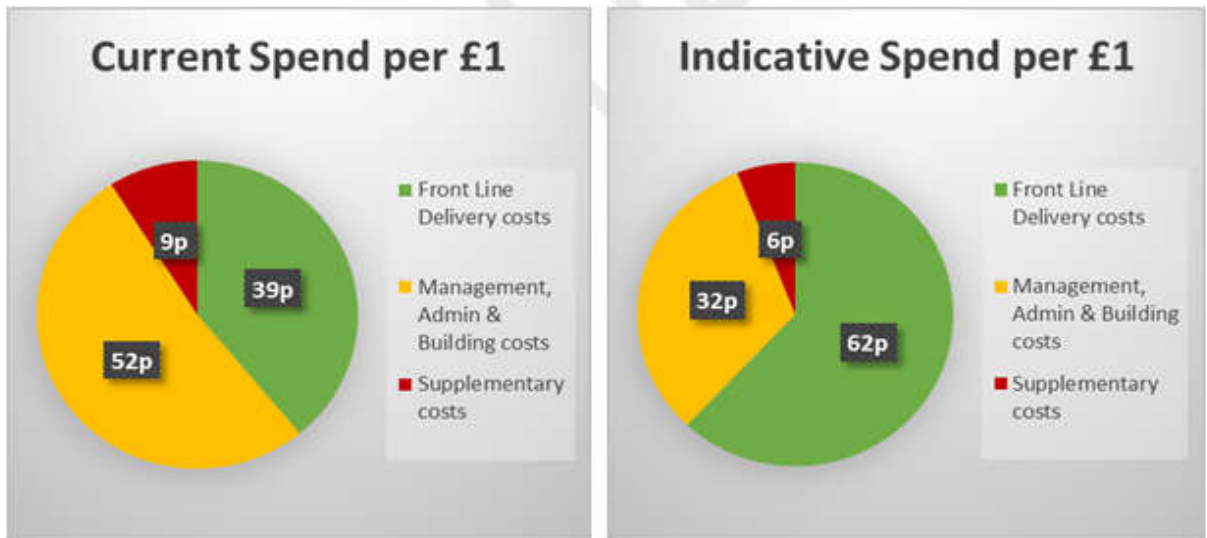
Current children’s centres:

There are not 53 purpose-built children’s centres at present – there is a variety of buildings and uses, which include:

Standalone on a school site	14	1 of which is a portable building 1 of which is a thatched cottage
Part of a school building	14	
Based in the community	17	1 of which is a council flat 4 of which are standalone buildings
Based in a library	4	
Pure outreach delivery with no dedicated physical building	4	
Total	53	

What we are proposing:

- We are proposing to invest £5.2 million in a more targeted and cost-effective service for people who need it the most, with more than 60 per cent of spend (£3.2m) on frontline delivery.



- The proposed new service would be part of the council's overall £65 million spend on support for children aged 0-5, including £12.7 million of the healthy child programme. Our overall spending on Children's Services has risen by £20 million over the last two years
- Our new service would be part of a "whole system, whole family" approach, joining up services with other organisations
- We are proposing to have 15 early childhood and family bases, which would offer outreach service in people's homes and community venues across the county. They would be designated children's centres. There would be two in each district, except for Norwich, which would have three. There would also be digital advice available for families.
- We will maintain bases in areas of greatest need
- The new service will operate a more consistent outreach model, which takes services out to families across the county
- It's our intention that majority of the remaining sites will remain open and continue to be used for children and families

Benefits of the proposed new service:

- We will maintain additional bases in areas of greatest need



- The new service will operate an outreach model which takes services out to families across the county
- A greater proportion of the county council's money will be spent on frontline services, instead of management and administration and running costs
- A clearer focus on outcomes, to evidence the difference that we will make
- Services will be more focused on families who need extra help, with the following impacts:
 - supporting children to achieve their developmental milestones;
 - preventing more children aged up to five from experiencing neglect or emotional harm;
 - increasing social mobility, which means helping children to reach their full potential in life.

What has changed, following the public consultation?

Around 1,600 people responded to our consultation and many said how much they valued children's centres and the services they provided.

Our proposed response to the consultation is:

- **Greater recognition that all families benefit from universal group activities** - our bases would provide group activities, open to all families in areas of high need and our libraries would stage year-round bounce and rhyme and stay and chat sessions at our 47 libraries.
- **Making it easier to access support** - staging regular drop-in sessions for families and providing one-stop shop advice and support.
- **Extending the new service to support families connect with and make use of activities provided by local communities and partner organisations.** We will help families connect with and make use of services from other providers and organisations, to extend networks of support.
- **Keeping more buildings to reflect varying local needs in rural and urban areas.** We have adjusted the balance between outreach and building-based services, increasing the number of bases from seven to 15, within the £5.2 million budget.



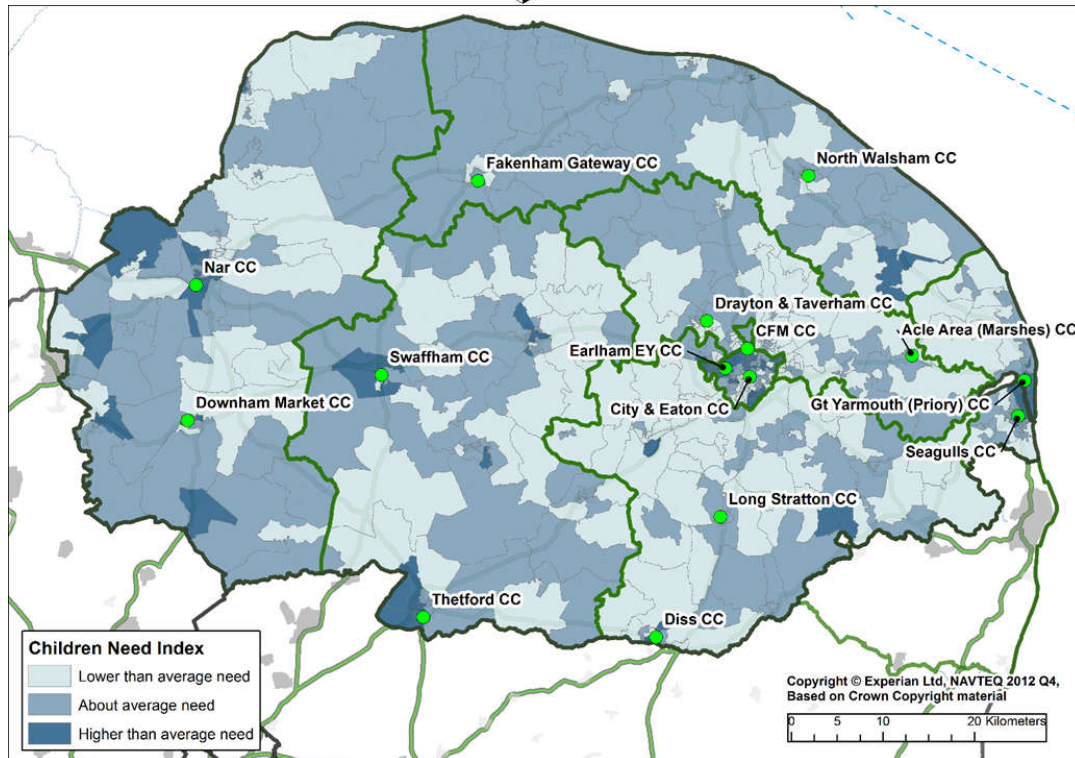
- **Investing £500,000 in buildings currently used as a designated children’s centres**, to support groups that can continue to provide services for children and families.

If approved, this means the new Early Childhood and Family Service would:

- Provide targeted support for families with children aged 0-5
- Offer help so that all families can connect with local support and universal early childhood activities
- Operate 15 early childhood and family support bases and use a range of local delivery venues
- Contribute to joint working and maintaining partnerships as part of securing a local early childhood offer
- Invest £250,000 in community development to ensure there are strong networks of support
- Support an enhanced online and digital information, advice and guidance offer for families

The proposed bases are:

District area	Centres proposed for retention as an early childhood and family base
Breckland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swaffham • Thetford (Kingsway)
Broadland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acle • Drayton and Taverham
Great Yarmouth Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Yarmouth (Priory) • Seagulls
King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downham Market • Nar
North Norfolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fakenham • North Walsham
Norwich City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catton Grove, Fiddlewood, Milecross (CFM) • City and Eaton • Earlham
South Norfolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diss • Long Stratton



Next steps:

- Norfolk County Council's children's services committee will discuss the proposals at its meeting at 10am on Tuesday, 22nd January. It will decide whether to approve them.
- If the proposals are approved, the council will finalise its procurement process, to select a new provider or providers, to operate the new service from October.

Further details:

- For further details or queries, please contact ECFScommissioning@norfolk.gov.uk