

APPENDIX 1

Children's Centre Programme Re-shaping

Summary of Proposals, Impact and Consultation Process

1.0 Proposals

1.1 The programme of 19 centres will be re-shaped and some children's centre footprints will be merged resulting in a reduction of 'designated' centres to 13. Whilst only 6 centres are directly affected by these proposals, all footprints have been re-shaped to some degree to improve the alignment with the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and the new GP Consortia. The proposed re-shaping is summarised below. The merging of centres will not result in any change or reduction to services. Most importantly, the changes will have no impact on children or families; they will be able to continue to access needs led services from the same venues they currently use.

Proposals for merging centres:

Knutsford and Wilmslow Locality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilmslow and Alderley Edge CC to merge with Oakenclough CC
Macclesfield Locality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Henbury, Prestbury & Upton CC to merge with Broken Cross CC
Congleton Locality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alsager CC to merge with Sandbach CC
Crewe and Nantwich Locality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shavington CC to merge with Pebble Brook CC
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mablins Lane CC to merge with Underwood West CC
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nantwich Rural CC to merge with Nantwich CC

2.0 Impact

Service delivery - these changes will have no impact on service delivery which will continue across all footprints in line with need.

Staffing - whilst the staffing structure has been altered slightly to accommodate the changes (admin posts only), no member of staff will lose their job.

Accommodation - the merged centres will still continue to use the sites previously designated as a children's centre along with other outreach bases across the re-shaped footprints. The Mabllins Lane and Shavington sites will continue to be used for the delivery of services for children and families, including the recently re-located Child Development Service.

Children and Families – most importantly children and families should notice no changes to the services on offer. The footprints may change, but families can still choose to access services in the places that they are currently offered and delivered by the staff who are currently in post. As the children's services redesign is implemented, it is hoped that children's centre staff will be joined more and more by colleagues in other agencies and that the children's workforce will continue to deliver accessible services to families using a wide range of locations.

Footprints - the footprints have been re-shaped to reflect the merging of designated centres. This has resulted in some very large footprints, bigger than the recommended 800-1200 children under five. However, the footprint is a nominal 'reach' area for planning and data collection purposes and does not impact on service delivery or staffing models and it does not determine where families go to access services.

3.0 Benefits

3.1 The previous focus was as much on the number of buildings and designated centres as it was on service delivery. For a large, mainly rural authority, meeting the targets for the number of designated centres was always a significant challenge resulting in some 'virtual' models that were not our preferred option.

This re-shaped model:

- Delivers a more sustainable, future proof service
- Allows a greater focus on service co-ordination, delivery and locality working
- Provides improved value for money by making better use of resources and removing some operational management and admin costs
- Continues to make best use of significant capital investment made at Shavington and Mabllins Lane
- Provides an opportunity to re-shape footprints so that they align better with LAPs and GP Consortia

4.0 Consultation – process and progress

4.1 The Local Authority has a duty to consult on any changes it proposes to make to children's centre services, bearing in mind the key requirements set out in the Statutory Guidance:

- All *significant* changes must be consulted on but 'significant' is not defined; this is for the LA to determine

- Consultation must be proportionate to the level and impact of the changes
- There is a presumption against closure but 'this is not intended to restrict local authorities in making necessary changes, to forward plan and reshape services for the future'
- There is a requirement 'to make sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need' – however, the level of sufficiency is to be determined by the Local Authority

4.2 Having consulted the Statutory Guidance, and bearing in mind the above key points, the conclusion reached is that the proposed re-shaping is not a significant change. The following consultation proposals are made on the basis of that assessment.

4.3 **Consultation** - to take place in February and March and to involve the following groups:

- Children's Centres Advisory Boards
- Children's Centres Parent Forums
- Children's Centre Staff
- Integrated Programme Board
- SMT
- Lead Member for Children's Services

4.4 **Timescale** - the proposal is to implement the changes as soon as possible following the consultation period (assuming there is support for the proposals) and CEC approval, ideally from April 2011.

4.5 Consultation is currently underway and to date, there has been a high level of support for the proposals. The only issue emerging, which was fully expected, is the need to re-name some centres; this is causing some interesting and lively debate.

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