

CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Executive Summary

Woking Borough Council has an opportunity to ensure that Woking families who need support can continue to do so by building on the work of the Family Support Programme and delivering Family Centres in the Borough in partnership with Surrey County Council.

Children's Centres are changing under the Surrey County Council Family Resilience Strategy and Family Centre Specification. This proposal will see Woking Borough Council be the lead provider for Family Centres in Woking and develop the vital outreach support to families.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

Woking Borough Council will be the lead provider for Woking Family Centres in a partnership arrangement with Surrey County Council.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To ensure the continued provision of children's services in the Borough.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the public consultation, on the 29th January 2019, Surrey County Council agreed to endorse the re-modelling of the remaining Children's Centres to create Family Centres as part of a wider Family Service to support families with children aged 0 to 11 that are the most vulnerable.
- 1.2 Woking currently has six Children's Centres based in Sheerwater, Goldsworth Park, Knaphill, Horsell, Brookwood and Pyrford. This year, four centres will close and two Family Centres in Sheerwater and Goldsworth Park will be established, as per the Surrey County Council Family Resilience model (details of this are in Family Centre Specification, Appendix 1). Additionally, Borough-wide support from Family Centre staff will continue to be delivered by outreach staff both in family homes and appropriate community venues.

2.0 Timescales

- 2.1 Currently, most Children's Centres are owned and managed by independent Trusts, usually affiliated with a local school academy. However, under the Family Resilience model, all Family Centre staff within a Borough will come under one provider.
- 2.2 In Woking, there is no identified lead provider from the existing Trusts, therefore the alternatives are either for Woking Borough Council to be the lead provider, or for an external provider to deliver the Family Centres in Woking following a tender process.
- 2.3 Should Woking Borough Council agree to be the provider, this would be formalised under a Service Level Agreement in partnership with and supported by Surrey County Council. Under this arrangement, staff would TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations) from their current employers to Woking Borough Council. A review of the centres would then be carried out to ensure that the new model meets the needs of Woking families as per the specification.

3.0 Opportunities

- 3.1 Supporting families: Family Centres do not exist in isolation but are part of a local integrated system and a wide range of partners that builds family resilience in Woking, improving the life chances of the most vulnerable children. As lead provider, Woking Borough Council can bring local resources together to ensure that those families who need help are supported in the best way and can work to ensure the voluntary, community and faith sector and health providers are joined up in the right way.
- 3.2 In practice, Family Centres will use the same case recording system, assessment tools, practice approaches and measures as the Woking Family Support Team; which has been operating since 2013. Parenting courses will be delivered in partnership between Family Centre and Family Support Programme staff and the specification documents and outcomes framework for both are similar.
- 3.3 Family Centres can therefore be seen as a positive extension of what Woking is already providing, rather than starting a completely new and unknown endeavour. Woking therefore has a positive opportunity to bring these teams together and provide a consistent offer for vulnerable children and their families across the Borough.
- 3.4 Holistic and local offer: We know through experience from the Family Support Team that families benefit from support that is embedded locally. Borough teams, especially Housing, Benefits and Centres for the Community are key to supporting the wider determinants of health and well-being and many families supported by Family Centres will naturally engage with these Borough teams.

- 3.5 Therefore, with Woking Borough Council as the provider, local teams will work together for a joined-up approach and families will not be painstakingly referred to different, independent providers. This reduces duplication and allows for a holistic, timely and preventative intervention that can support meaningful change for families. It also enables us to deliver a service that meets the needs of Woking's unique demographic, based upon our knowledge and experience of Woking communities.
- 3.6 Strategic use of assets: By utilising our existing community buildings such as our Centres for the Community, we can ensure that families receive support across the whole Borough and not just from the two identified Family Centres. This provides greater flexibility because we know that communities evolve over time, as do the needs of families. We will be able to provide a truly holistic service offer in our communities through better use of all of our assets including the Vyne, Moorcroft, St Marys and Parkview Community centres. We can broaden their use and appeal across all age ranges whilst providing focussed support for our vulnerable residents. Effective use of all our assets will support the delivery of evidence based programmes supporting for example healthy lifestyles and family relationships, parenting skills and support groups for parents of children with additional needs, for example communications and language programmes.
- 3.7 Family Centre staff can co-locate, where appropriate, with providers of universal services. For example, NHS and Family Centre staff will have the opportunity to work together in the new town centre Maternity Hub in Woking Library, to link universal perinatal services with targeted parenting support. This enables families to access support seamlessly, whilst reducing the stigma that can be attached to targeted intervention.
- 3.8 Strengthening community providers: Family Centres will no longer provide universal services such as traditional 'stay and play' sessions. However, we know that many local faith groups and charities already deliver these across the Borough. Rather than delivering this work ourselves, we can support and strengthen existing community providers to share assets, come together for training and encourage them to connect families they meet, who need targeted support, to the Family Centres.
- 3.9 Health and wellbeing: Family Centres will contribute towards Woking's Health and Wellbeing Priorities of:

'Improving Children's Health and Wellbeing'; 'Developing a Preventative Approach'; 'Promoting Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health'; 'Safeguarding the Population'.

4.0 Implications

Financial

- 4.1 Surrey County Council will annually fund Woking Borough Council a fixed rate of £636,709 (Appendix 1 p. 21) for the delivery of Family Centres. The agreement timeframe will be for 3 years + 1 year + 1 year.
- 4.2 The annual funding for the duration of the Service Level Agreement will not be increased to account for inflation. To allow for this, all staff salaries have been costed at the top of their pay scale. The exact salaries will not be known until the new staffing structure has been confirmed following TUPE. In addition, there is some flexibility within the leadership and overheads budget which can be used flexibly to account for increasing costs if required.
- 4.3 The staffing structure has been developed that meets the service needs of the new Family Centres as per the new specification. This enables Woking to achieve the key performance indicators and develop effective support for families. The structure enables maximum capacity for front-line staffing including all on-costs, equipment and supervisory support.

- 4.4 A breakdown of Woking Family Centre budgets is shown below. The costs are estimates provided to us by Surrey County Council and in any event the service will be delivered within the specified Woking annual budget:

Woking annual budget	£636,709
Staffing: 1FTE Team Leader, 2FTE Senior Outreach Workers, 8FTE Outreach Workers, 1.36FTE Family Workers, (25hrs pw, term-time only) 1FTE Team Administrator.	£544,420 (including on-costs and costed at the top of pay scales)
Buildings including rent, maintenance and utilities	£25,000
Leadership costs, fixed overheads, staff development and family enabling costs	£67,289
Total	£636,709

- 4.5 Surrey will indemnify Woking for all staffing costs associated with TUPE including initial redundancies and any additional salary costs associated with this.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.6 Existing Children's Centre staff will TUPE to Woking Borough Council from their current employers if there is a role in the new structure that matches their current role. Following this, an assessment exercise will be conducted and redundancies (funded by Surrey County Council) will be made for staff who are not successful.
- 4.7 Training and development for Family Centre staff is similar to that provided for staff within the existing Woking Family Support Team. Safeguarding training is available to all Woking Borough Council staff through the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board and Surrey will provide specialist training to all Family Centre staff under the new Family Resilience model.
- 4.8 Family Centre staff will have expertise in childhood and early years development. This will expand the existing knowledge and expertise of the Family Support Team and benefit wider customer-facing Council staff.

Community Safety

- 4.9 Some families engaging with the service will have interaction with the Criminal Justice System (Appendix 1 p.7). Family Centres can provide support to local families where a parent or guardian is in prison.

Risk Management

- 4.10 Financial risks associated with the annual budget will be managed by the Woking Borough Council Family Support Team Manager and Business Support Manager.

- 4.11 Performance management (Appendix 1 p. 17) will be managed by the new Team Leader.
- 4.12 Staff undertaking home visits to families will need to be adequately supported through safe systems of work including a lone-worker safety device.

Sustainability

- 4.13 The timescales for the partnership agreement will be for 3 years + 1 year + 1 year (Appendix 1 p.10).
- 4.14 The annual budget envelope for this service is £636,709. Based upon the estimated costings provided by Surrey County Council, this service can be delivered within budget.

Equalities

- 4.15 Family Centres will support protected characteristics, as per the Equalities Act 2010.

Safeguarding

- 4.16 All staff will be trained by Surrey County Council in child safeguarding procedures, as per the current arrangement with the Family Support Team.

5.0 Consultations

- 5.1 Councillor Colin Kemp, Portfolio Holder for the Family Support Team;
- 5.2 Nigel Denning, Early Help Transformation Lead, Surrey County Council.

REPORT ENDS