

Children's Services Committee

Report title:	Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22 and Revenue Budget 2018-19
Date of meeting:	16 January 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Sara Tough Executive Director of Children's Services
Strategic impact	
<p>The proposals in this report will inform Norfolk County Council's decisions on council tax and contribute towards the Council setting a legal budget for 2018-19 which sees its total resources targeted at meeting the needs of residents.</p> <p>The information in this report is intended to enable the Committee to take a considered view of all the relevant factors to agree budget proposals for 2018-19 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2021-22, and make recommendations on these to the Policy and Resources Committee. Policy and Resources will then consider how the proposals from Service Committees contribute to delivering an overall balanced budget position on 29 January 2018 before the Full Council meets 12 February to agree the final budget and level of council tax for 2018-19.</p>	

Executive summary

This report sets out details of the County Council's strategy which will set out the future direction, vision and objectives for the Council across all its services. It also provides an overview of the financial issues for the Council, including the latest details of the Autumn Budget 2017 and the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2018-19. It then summarises this Committee's saving proposals for 2018-19, identified budget pressures and funding changes, and sets out the proposed cash-limited revenue budget as a result of these. The report also provides details of the proposed capital programme.

Details of the outcomes of rural and equality impact assessments in respect of the 2018-19 Budget proposals are set out in the paper, alongside the findings of public consultation around specific savings proposals, where relevant to the Committee.

Policy and Resources Committee works with Service Committees to coordinate the budget-setting process, advising on the overall planning context for the Council. Service Committees review and advise on the budget proposals for their individual service areas. The report therefore provides an update on the Service Committee's detailed planning to feed into the Council's budget process for 2018-19. The County Council is due to agree its budget for 2018-19, and Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2021-22 on 12 February 2018.

The Children's Services Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Note the new corporate priorities – Norfolk Futures – to focus on demand management, prevention and early help, and a locality focus to service provision as set out in section 2 of this report.**

- 2) Consider and agree the service-specific budgeting issues for 2018-19 as set out in section 5;
- 3) Consider and comment on the Committee's specific budget proposals for 2018-19 to 2021-22, including the findings of public consultation in respect of the budget proposals set out in Appendix 2;
- 4) Consider the findings of equality and rural impact assessments, attached at Appendix 3 to this report, and in doing so, note the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5) Consider and agree any mitigating actions proposed in the equality and rural impact assessments;
- 6) Consider the recommendations of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, and:
 - a. Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the Council's budget includes an inflationary increase of 2.99% in council tax in 2018-19, within the council tax referendum limit of 3.0% for 2018-19;
 - b. Note that the Council's budget planning includes an increase in council tax of 3.0% for the Adult Social Care precept in 2018-19, meaning that no increase in the Adult Social Care precept would be levied in 2019-20.
- 7) Agree and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the draft Committee Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix 4:
 - a. including all of the savings for 2018-19 to 2021-22 as set out. *Or*
 - b. removing any savings unacceptable to the Committee and replacing them with alternative savings proposals within the Committee's remit.

For consideration by Policy and Resources Committee on 29 January 2018, to enable Policy and Resources Committee to recommend a sound, whole-Council budget to Full Council on 12 February 2018.
- 8) Agree and recommend the Capital Programmes and schemes relevant to this Committee as set out in Appendix 5 to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration on 29 January 2018, to enable Policy and Resources Committee to recommend a Capital Programme to Full Council on 12 February 2018.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council's approach to medium term service and financial planning includes a rolling medium term financial strategy, with an annual budget agreed each year.

The County Council agreed the 2017-18 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2019-20 at its meeting 20 February 2017. At this point, the MTFS identified a gap for budget planning purposes of £35.015m.

- 1.2. The MTFS position is updated through the year to provide Members with the latest available financial forecasts to inform wider budget setting work across the organisation. As previously reported to Committees, Policy and Resources Committee considered a report “Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22” on 3 July 2017, which set out a forecast gap of £100.000m for the period to 2021-22.
- 1.3. This year, the budget-setting process is closely aligned with development of the new Council Plan and associated corporate strategy work. Further details of this were set out in the report “Caring for your County” and in the Strategic and Financial Planning reports considered by Policy and Resources Committee.
- 1.4. Norfolk County Council is due to agree its new Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018-19 to 2021-22 on 12 February 2018. This paper sets out the latest information on the Local Government Finance Settlement and the financial and planning context for the County Council for 2018-19 to 2021-22. It summarises the Committee’s pressures, changes and savings proposals for 2018-19, the proposed cash limit revenue budget based on all current proposals and identified pressures, and the proposed capital programme.

2. County Council Strategy and Norfolk Futures

- 2.1. The County Council Strategy will set out the future direction, vision and objectives for the Council across all its services.
- 2.2. A key plank of the new strategy will be Norfolk Futures. This comprises a number of initiatives focused on demand management, prevention and early help, and a locality focus to service provision, as referenced in the Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22 report presented at Policy and Resources 30 October 2017.
- 2.3. Norfolk Futures will focus on delivering the administration’s manifesto priorities over the Medium Term Financial Strategy period and include:

2.4 Local Service strategy:

- We want to proactively target our services in the places where they are most needed in our market towns, Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King’s Lynn.
- Joining up different areas of the council’s work under one roof will enable the closure of little-used buildings and remodelled services.
- Refocusing our investment, based on the evidence we have of service usage will mean we can create services that meet the need of the residents in that place, rather than a one size fits all offer.

2.5 A new deal for families in crisis:

- We want to keep families together when life gets tough, and reduce the number of children entering the care system.

- To achieve this will we focus on early intervention to keep children safely at home.
- When we have to help and offer care we will use foster care and adoption where appropriate, which we know deliver better outcomes for our children.
- We will reduce our use of residential care and invest in specialist support alternatives.
- Care leavers will be better supported through high quality post 16 provision.

2.6 **Promoting independence for vulnerable adults:**

- We want to give people the skills and confidence to live independently and safely, in their own homes, for as long as possible.
- To do this we will focus on those most likely to need our formal services at some point to help them to stay independent for longer.
- This will involve supporting people to overcome problems and find renewed levels of independence.
- Helping people with learning difficulties to do the things we all want to do in life.
- Strengthen social work so that it prevents, reduces and delays need.

2.7 **Smarter information and advice:**

- We want to make it easier for people to find trusted, reliable information to make decisions that improve their independence and well-being.
- Direct and connect people to services in their local community.
- This will help people to take control of their lives and their futures and to reduce reliance on health and local authority services.

2.8 **Towards a Housing Strategy:**

We care about the large number of people who are not able to afford a home of their own. As a county council we can help by accelerating the delivery of new housing, in all forms, throughout Norfolk by:

- Using county council landholdings to undertake direct development via Repton Property Developments Ltd, NCC's development company.
- Providing up-front finance for infrastructure development.
- Acquiring strategic landholdings with a view to development.
- Working in partnership with housing authorities, the HCA, and the LEP to secure additional investment.
- Highlight gaps in the type and location of accommodation to meet the needs of the people of Norfolk today and in the future.

2.9 **Digital Norfolk:**

Driving the creation of a sustainable technology infrastructure for better broadband and mobile services.

- Norfolk will be a place where all appropriate local government services are available online and are used safely and effectively by people to live, work, learn and play.
- We want to use technological solutions, to provide smarter ways of working and reduce costs within the council and in frontline services.

- Support provision of smarter information and advice by providing quicker, reliable access.
- This could include more online transactions, which are more convenient for many people and are more cost effective.

2.10 Commercialisation:

- Sweating our assets to maximise return on investment to invest in frontline services. Making the most of our under-utilised buildings and land by selling or leasing it to generate rent income.
- Running traded services profitably to make a return for the County Council to invest in frontline services.
- Seeking out new commercial opportunities.
- Managing the council's services in the most efficient way.
- Make sure the £700m we spend through contracted out services is managed and reviewed to ensure value for money.

3. Strategic financial context

- 3.1. Through the submission of an Efficiency Plan in 2016¹, the Council has gained access to confirmed funding allocations for the four years 2016-17 to 2019-20. As a result, the Council's main funding settlement in the period to 2019-20 is not expected to change substantially, although allocations are confirmed annually in the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 3.2. The **Autumn Budget**, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, on Wednesday 22 November 2017 contained relatively few announcements with implications for the County Council. The Chancellor characterised it as a "balanced approach" being adopted in the Budget, including preparing for the exit from the EU, maintaining fiscal responsibility, investing in skills and infrastructure, supporting housebuilding and home ownership and helping families with the rising cost of living.
- 3.3. The **provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2018-19** was announced on 19 December 2017. The 2018-19 Settlement represents the third year of the four year certainty offer which began in 2016-17, and was described by the Government as providing a path to a new system which will build on the current 50% retention scheme and will see councils retain an increased proportion of locally collected business rates. The Department for Communities and Local Government plans to implement the latest phase of the Business Rates Retention Scheme (BRRS) in 2020-21, which will see 75% of business rates retained by local government. This is to be achieved by rolling in existing grants including Public Health Grant and Revenue Support Grant. Local Government will also retain a 75% share of growth from the 2020-21 reset onwards. 100% Business Rates pilots are continuing with a number of new pilots announced for 2018-19. Norfolk was not one of the 2018-19 pilots, although there may be a further opportunity to apply to participate in 2019-20.
- 3.4. In recognition of the pressures facing local government, the settlement includes plans for the core council tax referendum limit of 2% to be increased by 1% to **allow a maximum increase of 3%** before a local referendum is required (in line

¹ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/our-budget-and-council-tax/our-budget/our-budget>

with inflation) in both 2018-19 and 2019-20. The implications of this are discussed in the section on the latest 2018-19 budget position below.

- 3.5. The Settlement acknowledged concerns about planned reductions to Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) and as a result this is to be increased by £15m in 2018-19 – so that RSDG will remain at £65m throughout the settlement period (i.e. to 2019-20). There has been no change to the distribution methodology, which means an additional (one-off) £0.737m for the County Council in 2018-19.
- 3.6. The Government set out plans to look at options for dealing with the negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) allocations within the settlement which appear in 2019-20, and intends to consult in the spring to inform planning for the 2019-20 settlement. It should be noted that Norfolk is not in a negative RSG position during the four year settlement. The Government has also published a formal consultation on the review of relative needs and resources, intended to deliver an updated and more responsive distribution methodology for funding to be implemented from 2020-21.
- 3.7. No new funding has been announced for social care. However the Government has recognised that a long term solution to adequately funding social care services is required, and confirmed that a green paper on future challenges within adult social care is due to be published in summer 2018. There was no mention in the Settlement of any funding for the recently announced local government pay offer for 2018-19 and 2019-20 of 2% in each year, with higher increases for those earning less than £19,430. There was also no extension of the Transitional Grant provided in 2016-17 and 2017-18, which has ceased in 2018-19.
- 3.8. The latest estimate of the Council's overall budget position for 2018-19 as a result of the above, and any other issues, will be reported to Policy and Resources Committee in January.

4. 2018-19 Budget planning

4.1 2017-20 Medium Term Financial Strategy

County Council approved the 2017-18 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20 on 20 February 2017. The Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2019-20 set out a balanced budget for 2017-18, but a deficit remained of £16.125m in 2018-19, and £18.890m in 2019-20. The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2017-20 therefore set out a forecast gap for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20 of **£35.015m** and included planned net savings of **£72.737m**.

4.2 2017-18 budget position

The latest details of the Committee's 2017-18 budget position are set out in the budget monitoring report elsewhere on the agenda. The Council's overarching budget planning for 2018-19 continues to assume that the 2017-18 Budget will be fully delivered (i.e. that all savings are achieved as planned and there are no significant overspends).

4.3 The budget planning process for 2018-19

As reported to Service Committees in September, since the preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, further pressures on the budget were identified, resulting in changes to the Council's budget planning position. At that point, the estimate of the budget gap for the four year planning period up to 2021-22 was **£100.000m**, and in September Service Committees were informed of the allocation of savings targets to aid in closing this projected gap.

In October, Service Committees then reported to Policy and Resources on the savings proposals identified to assist in closing the forecast gap for 2018-19. The total **gross** savings proposed were £41.593m. Policy and Resources Committee also considered a number of further changes to the Council's budget planning including the reversal and delay of a number of savings agreed as part of the 2017-18 Budget that had been identified as no longer deliverable in 2018-19. After new savings had been included, against the target **a budget gap of £7.806m remained for 2018-19 and £63.351m for the MTFs planning period 2018-22**. Policy and Resources Committee launched consultation on £3.580m of savings for 2018-19, and the level of council tax for the year, in order for Service Committees to consider the outcomes of consultation in January to inform their budget setting decisions.

In November Service Committees were updated on the position reported to Policy and Resources Committee but were not asked to identify further savings. In view of the remaining gap position for 2018-19, Committees were advised that **any change to planned savings or removal of proposals would require alternative savings to be identified**.

The budget position and the associated assumptions are kept under continuous review. The latest financial planning position will be presented to Policy and Resources Committee in January prior to budget-setting by County Council in February. The outline budget-setting timetable for 2018-19 is set out for information in Appendix 1 to this report.

4.4 Latest 2018-19 Budget position

The council's budget planning was originally based on an increase in council tax of 4.9%, and the general approach set out in the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy has been to raise general council tax in line with inflation, reflecting the Government's assumptions within the local government financial settlement.

The Government has now provided the discretion to raise general council tax by an additional 1% without the need for a local referendum in both 2018-19 and 2019-20, recognising the higher forecast rate of inflation. **This means council tax can be raised by 3% for general council tax and 3% for the adult social care precept, a total of 5.99% in 2018-19**. The Government's core spending power figures now assume the council will raise council tax by the maximum amount available of 5.99%.

Since the last budget report to Policy and Resources Committee in October 2017, a number of pressures have emerged which require funding in 2018-19. These include:

- Additional on-going funding to support Children's Services;
- Funding for the £12m investment in Children's Services;

- The national pay award offer of 2% plus higher increases for those earning less than £19,430;
- Changes to planned savings; and
- Continuing higher inflation rates

An additional 1.09% increase in council tax, to raise council tax by the maximum amount of 5.99% without requiring a local referendum would be worth approximately £3.9m in 2018-19 based on current tax base estimates. This would contribute to funding the above pressures, closing the gap in 2018-19, and reducing the 2019-20 forecast budget gap. A council tax increase of 5.99% would therefore enable a substantially more robust budget for 2018-19 and significantly reduce the risks for the council over the Medium Term Financial Strategy period.

In setting the annual budget, Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 requires the Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) to report to members on the robustness of budget estimates and the adequacy of proposed financial reserves. This informs the development of a robust and deliverable budget for 2018-19.

4.5 Budget planning assumptions 2018-19

Key assumptions within the Council's current budget model include:

- **A CPI (2.99%) increase in council tax** above the 3% Adult Social Care precept, based on the updated assumptions used by the Government in the time of the 2018-19 local government settlement. Any reduction in this increase will require additional savings to be found. It should be noted that currently CPI is running at 3.0%². The assumed council tax increases are subject to Full Council's decisions on the levels of Council Tax, which will be made before the start of each financial year. In addition to an annual increase in the level of Council Tax (but with no increase in council tax in 2021-22), the budget assumes modest annual tax base increases of 0.5%;
- **That Revenue Support Grant will substantially disappear in 2020-21. This equates to a pressure of around £39m, but significant uncertainty is attached to this and clearly the level of savings required in year three could be materially lower should this loss of funding not take place;**
- 2017-18 Budget and savings delivered in line with current plans (no overspend);
- Use of additional Adult Social Care funding during 2017-18 and future years as agreed by Adult Social Care Committee 10 July 2017, with no changes to the overall funding allocations in 2018-19;
- 2017-18 growth in Children's Services is included as an ongoing pressure and additional investment is included with Children's Services budgets to reflect 2017-18 pressures;
- Ongoing annual pressures will exist in waste budgets; and
- That undeliverable savings have been removed as set out elsewhere in this report, and that all the remaining savings proposed and included for 2018-19 can be successfully achieved.

² UK consumer price inflation: October 2017, published by the Office for National Statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/october2017>
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The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services' judgement on the robustness of the 2018-19 Budget is substantially based upon these assumptions.

5. Service Budget, Strategy and Priorities 2018-19

5.1. The priorities for Children's Services for 2018-19 to 2019-20 are:-

- To be delivering the very best service for the children of Norfolk
- To be a "Good" Children's Services (with outstanding features), as defined by Ofsted.
- To have stable leadership and strong partnerships
- To have a strong and capable permanent workforce
- To manage within a realistic budget
- To have effective demand management
- To have more permanence options for Children.
- Strengthening outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Strengthening performance management and business intelligenc

5.2. The main challenges and issues facing Children's Services are:-

- Improving outcomes for vulnerable children and pupils in Norfolk;
- Increase in service demand;
- Recruitment and retention of staff;
- Sufficiency in Looked after Children placements;
- Sufficiency in Special Education Needs and Disability placements;

5.3. There were no new specific implications of the settlement on the Children's Services committee.

5.4 However, as a result of the settlement, £2.000m has been added to the base of the Finance General budget. This budget will be available to fund the already agreed one-off £12.000m Children's Services investment over the next few years.

5.5 Last year's settlement confirmed the end of the Education Services grant from September 2017 and a new grant for School Improvement (monitoring and brokering). We received clarification on the use of this grant earlier this year, which has resulted in addition spending pressures on brokering arrangements. This change has been reflected in the Children's Services draft budget.

5.6 The settlement also detailed the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding, which is covered in a separate paper elsewhere on this Children's Services Committee agenda.

6. Budget proposals for the Children's Services Committee

6.1 The first consideration for savings has been further efficiencies and ensuring that the service utilising resources effectively. The subsequent area of consideration has been whether additional income can be secured for services that we can charge for. Proposals brought to the committee have avoided reducing preventative services and early intervention activities that are targeted at the most vulnerable families in need of our support.

6.2 The following table sets out a summary of the savings proposals for Children's Services committee to consider for recommendation to Policy and Resources committee:

Proposal Note: savings are shown as a negative figure	Savings 2018-19 £m	Savings 2019-20 £m	Savings 2020-21 £m	Savings 2021-22 £m	Total 2018-22 £m
Reduction in legal expenses	-0.142	-0.142			-0.284
Early Years training	-0.090				-0.090
Reduced reliance on agency social workers		-0.200			-0.200
Reduced Looked After Children's costs		-1.000	-2.000	-2.000	-5.000
Children Centred services	-2.000	-3.000			-5.000
Total new Children's savings	-2.232	-4.432	-2.000	-2.000	-10.574

6.3 **Reduction in legal expenses to ensure that we are getting legal advice only when we need to and that it is provided by a legal professional at the right level 2018-19 £0.142m saving; 2019-20 £0.142m saving**

Why is this being considered?

Improvements are currently being made to the robustness of social work decision making, and it is expected that this will lead to social workers only engaging legal services at the most appropriate time.

What would be required?

Guidance to social workers will be updated to provide clarity as to when legal advice about cases should be sought to ensure that we are getting legal advice only when we need to. Additionally, through work with legal services, Children's Services will ensure that when legal advice is needed, it is provided by a legal professional at the right level so that the Council are not paying more than needed to for legal advice.

What are the implications of the proposal?

The cost of legal advice for the department should reduce whilst ensuring that appropriate advice is sought at the right time and provided by a legal professional at the right level.

6.4 **Increase income received for Early Years training through charging more than we currently do 2018-19 £0.090m saving**

Why is this being considered?

Early years training provision has previously been reviewed with changes made to the charges for training courses that the Council sells to nurseries, pre-schools and other early year's providers. The Council has the power to offer training for all early years providers and is able to impose reasonable charges when securing such services. The Council is required to secure appropriate training provision for specific groups (such as those who are judged less than 'good' by OFSTED) and to ensure that providers are able to access training around the Early Years Foundation Stage, SEND/Vulnerable groups and Safeguarding. The Council should enable providers to choose where and how they take up training or quality improvement.

What would be required?

A review would be undertaken of the training courses that we currently sell to nurseries, pre-schools and other early year's providers, alongside a review of the charges.

What are the implications of the proposal?

Children's Services early years training offer will be a more traded and commercialised programme. This will mean that those early years settings that choose to access the training offer will be charged more for the provision than they are currently charged, thus increasing the income received and reducing the net cost of the service to the Council.

6.5 Reduce the reliance on agency social workers through the recruitment of more permanent social workers and improved retention of existing staff 2019-20 £0.200m saving

Why is this being considered?

Children's Services currently relies significantly upon agency social workers and managers whilst work is undertaken to improve recruitment and retention of permanent staff. Additional funding has previously been allocated to offset the additional costs of agency workers.

What would be required?

Actions to improve rates of recruitment and retention are already being taken, and these actions have been effective. This activity includes recruiting, inducting and supporting newly qualified social workers through the Norfolk Institute of Professional Excellence; in effect "growing our own". These roles are supernumerary and the programme provides newly qualified social workers with additional support whilst they build up workloads and gain hands-on experience. This programme is key to the department being able to recruit and retain staff, and needs to be funded on a recurrent basis.

What are the implications of the proposal?

As the permanent workforce increases there will be less need to use agency workers, which will reduce the additional costs currently being incurred that are over and above the normal establishment costs for social workers. This proposal is expected to make savings in 2018-19, but this initial release of funding will be utilised to provide recurrent funding for the supernumerary Norfolk Institute of Professional Excellence posts, which will ensure sustainable long-term recruitment. The remainder of the saving will be released in 2019-20.

6.6 Implement the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme to achieve better outcomes for the children and young people involved in our services and to reduce the numbers that we look after, which will ultimately lead to a reduction in how much we spend. 2019-20 £1.000m saving; 2020-21 £2.000m saving; 2021-22 £2.000m saving

Why is this being considered?

The numbers of children who are looked after has significantly increased in recent years, along with the cost of providing appropriate care and support. We want to ensure that the right care and support is being offered at the right time to the right people. As part of the Norfolk Futures programme, Policy and Resources committee has agreed significant one-off investment to develop earlier targeted help where needed and to re-balance the placement mix

available to meet the needs of the children and young people who do require care, which should result in a more sustainable system that provides better outcomes for children and families.

What would be required?

Investment in the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation Programme will be required, as detailed in 3.2 above. This will include improving support to families to prevent children and young people from coming into care, and increasing the numbers of children who are fostered, particularly by foster carers who work directly for Norfolk County Council.

What are the implications of the proposal?

Over the life of the transformation programme, it is expected that the department will see a reduction in the number of children and young people who are looked after. This will be due to families being better supported to stay together and, where this not possible, there will be an increase in permanence arrangements. Additionally, it is expected that the placement mix for those children who do need to be looked after will change to see a shift towards foster care, particularly in-house foster care, and away from expensive, residential placements. This should lead to a reduced unit cost per child looked after. The reduction in numbers of children who are looked after and the reduction in unit cost will generate savings.

- 6.7 **Remodel the children's centre service offer to provide a more targeted response to families through working more closely with our other services and partners, for example by sharing buildings, and by focusing their work on the families that need them most**
2018-19 £2.000m saving; 2019-20 £3.000m saving

Why is this being considered?

The current delivery model provides universal Children's Centre service access to all families in Norfolk and is delivered from both dedicated buildings and via a number of outreach locations. There is now an opportunity to consider how improved integration and collaboration between both universal and targeted support services to ensure that the appropriate response is provided to the right family at the right time.

What would be required?

Remodelling of the Children's Centre service for Norfolk is part of the Local Services Strategy corporate priority work, and will look at how other properties within the public estate can be utilised to support effective delivery of this service whilst making better use of available resources. That work will begin for the 18-19 financial year with our current providers and partners. It is envisaged the result would be services being provided more flexibly through effective joint working, including closer alignment with our library service and Public Health commissioned Healthy Child Programme. Ensuring that appropriate provision is made available to the most vulnerable families and communities will remain the key priority of the Children's Centre Service.

What are the implications of the proposal?

Children's Centre service providers already undertake a detailed needs analysis to identify vulnerable groups. The redesigned service will be more focussed on those target groups recognised through this local needs analysis. The provision of targeted information, guidance and support will be determined in collaboration

with the Healthy Child Programme and Social Care teams to ensure that each family that requires it receives an appropriate and effective response to meet their needs. It may also involve a scaling back of the universal offer from the Children's Centre service in some instances from 2018/19 onwards. Parents and children accessing Children's Centre Services will continue to be able to access a range of information, advice, guidance and support, including an increased offer from on-line support. For those in need of face to face support, this would be provided on a targeted outreach basis, as well as support being available via phone and on-line. This would apply to vulnerable families and communities living in both rural and urban areas.

7. Revenue Budget

- 7.1. The tables in Appendix 4 set out in detail the Committee's proposed cash limited budget for 2018-19, and the medium term financial plans for 2019-20 to 2021-22. These are based on the identified pressures and proposed budget savings reported to this Committee in October, which have been updated in this report to reflect any changes to assumptions.
- 7.2 In recognition of the increased pressures on the Children's Services budget, as reflected in the 2017-18 projected overspend, £6.000m has been added to the base budget. This is to ensure that Children's Services has a "robust" budget going forwards.
- 7.3 Cost neutral adjustments for each Committee will be reflected within the Policy and Resources Revenue Budget 2018-19 to 2021-21 paper which will be presented on the 29 January 2018.
- 7.4 The Revenue Budget proposals set out in Appendix 4 form a suite of proposals which will enable the County Council to set a balanced Budget for 2018-19. **As such recommendations to add growth items, amend or remove proposed savings, or otherwise change the budget proposals will require the Committee to identify offsetting saving proposals or equivalent reductions in planned expenditure.**
- 7.5 The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services is required to comment on the robustness of budget proposals, and the estimates upon which the budget is based, as part of the annual budget-setting process. This assessment will be reported to Policy and Resources Committee and County Council.

8. Capital Programme 2018-19

- 8.1. A summary of the Capital Programme and schemes relevant to this committee can be found in Appendix 5.

9. Public Consultation

- 9.1. Under Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999, authorities are under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local people when making decisions relating to local services. This includes council tax payers, those who use or are likely to use services provided by the authority and other stakeholders

or interested parties. There is also a common law duty of fairness which requires that consultation should take place at a time when proposals are at a formative stage; should be based on sufficient information to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration of options; should give adequate time for consideration and response and that consultation responses should be conscientiously taken into account in the final decision.

9.2. Saving proposals to bridge the shortfall for 2018-19 were put forward by committees, the majority of which did not require consultation because they could be achieved without affecting service users.

9.3. Where individual savings for 2018-19 required consultation:

- The public consultations ran from the 6 November 2017 to 2 January 2018.
- Those consultations were published and consulted on via the Council's consultation hub Citizen Space at:
<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/budget2018/>
- We promoted the consultation through Your Norfolk residents' magazine, online publications, social media and our website.
- People were able to respond online and in writing. We also received responses by email to HaveYourSay@norfolk.gov.uk and accepted responses in other format, for example, petitions.
- Consultation documents were available in hard copy, large print and easy read as standard and other formats on request.
- Every response has been read in detail and analysed to identify the range of people's opinions, any repeated or consistently expressed views, and the anticipated impact of proposals on people's lives.

Children's centres and libraries consultation feedback

9.4. The findings of this consultation are being reported back to the Children's Services Committee and the Communities Committee because our proposals relate to the work of both committees.

9.5. In addition to the steps the council has taken to promote the consultation, we have also had meetings with all the organisations who run our children's centres to discuss our proposals with them and we asked the organisations to promote the consultation on our behalf. We have also promoted the consultation on the Family Information Service social media.

9.6. We received 335 responses received to this consultation. Of these, just over half (172 people or 51%) replied as individuals. Twenty respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a group, organisation or business but not all gave the names of their organisations; some were employees whose response did not necessarily represent the organisational view. Of the respondents who described their relationship to the service, most were people who use the library service (197) and/or parents/carers of a child (or children) under aged 0-5 (139).

9.7. We received a petition with 5,792 signatures. Norfolk County Council Labour Group undertook a separate consultation and submitted the responses they received which contained 81 comments relating to this proposal.

9.8. Key issues and concerns were:

- a) Children's centre services are valued, and some respondents said they regard them as essential or a priority.
- b) Several people said they think that children's centre services should be reviewed, for example because it is good practice to review any service periodically and because children's centre services need to adapt to changes in the way people live their lives.
- c) Several respondents said that they think our proposals would have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of families, and they are worried that families would become more isolated.
- d) A majority of people said that there need to be some children's centre services which all families can use, although some of these respondents said that there could be fewer universal services than there currently are.
- e) Several respondents said that having fewer universal services would make it harder for families to get help early on and before problems escalate, so families would end-up needing more intensive and costly support because they would end-up in crisis.
- f) Several respondents said it is difficult to identify which families need support - it is not just families on low incomes - the needs of families change over time and it is easier to provide support if families have built up a trusting relationship with children's centre staff from having attended universal groups.
- g) Some people said that children's centre services should be focused on the families that need them most, because the County Council has less money and so it is right or sensible that we should target our resources.
- h) Some people said they are worried that families living in rural areas would be negatively affected by the proposed changes to children's centre services, in particular some respondents said they are worried about having to travel further to get to services.
- i) Several people expressed support for children's centres and libraries sharing buildings, for example because it would help to get children reading or because it would help to make both services viable – although some people added that each area would need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis because co-location would not be suitable in every area.
- j) Many respondents said it would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services, because there would not be enough space for both services, the buildings would not have the right facilities and there would not be enough parking for everyone.
- k) Many people said it would not be appropriate for children's centres and libraries to share buildings because they offer very different services, in particular people raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families when libraries are public buildings.

9.9 A full summary of the consultation feedback received to the children's centre and libraries proposal can be seen at Appendix 2.

10. Equality and rural impact assessment – findings and suggested mitigation

10.1. When making decisions the Council must give due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

10.2. Equality and rural impact assessments have been carried out on each of Children's Services Committee's five budget proposals for 2018/19, to identify whether there may be any disproportionate or detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas.

10.3. It is evident from this process that the Committee's proposals will primarily impact on children and families – which is inevitable, because these groups constitute the majority of service users.

10.4. However, only one proposal (the proposal to Remodel the children's centre service offer) may have a detrimental impact on children and families.

10.5. Four mitigating are proposed to address this potential detrimental impact:-

- If the proposal to remodel children's centre services goes ahead, at an appropriate stage when the review has taken place, equality/rural impact assessments should be carried out on any options to cease, stop or change a service, to identify any potential impacts on service users. These assessments to include a risk assessment of access planning of potential sites, and a cost impact assessment on users.
- If any detrimental impacts are identified, they should be reported to Children's Services Committee, along with any proposed mitigating actions that could be carried out, for consideration before a final decision is made.
- Where service remodelling impacts on Norfolk County Council staff working patterns, line managers to consult with staff about any proposed changes, prior to them being agreed. This will enable any access issues to be highlighted. Where issues are identified, appropriate solutions should be sought e.g. reasonable adjustments.
- HR Shared Service to continue to monitor whether staff with protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in redundancy or redeployment figures, and if so, take appropriate action.

10.6. The full assessment findings are attached for consideration at Appendix 3. Clear reasons are provided for each proposal to show why, or why not, detrimental impact has been identified, and the nature of this impact

11. Financial implications

11.1. Financial implications for the Committee's Budget are set out throughout this report.

12. Issues, risks and innovation

- 12.1. Significant risks or implications have been set out throughout the report. Specific financial risks in this area are also identified in the Corporate Risk Register, including the risk of failing to manage significant reductions in local and national income streams (RM002) and the risk of failure to effectively plan how the Council will deliver services (RM006).
- 12.2. Decisions about significant savings proposals with an impact on levels of service delivery will require public consultation. As in previous years, saving proposals, and the Council's Budget as a whole, will be subject to equality and rural impact assessments later in the budget-setting process.

13. Background Papers

- 13.1. Background papers relevant to the preparation of this report are set out below.

Norfolk County Council Revenue and Capital Budget 2017-20, County Council, 20 February 2017, Item 4:

<http://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/444/Committee/2/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Norfolk County Council Budget Book 2017-20, May 2017:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/budget-and-council-tax/the-2017-2020-budget-book.pdf?la=en>

Caring for your County, Policy and Resources Committee, 3 July 2017, Item 7:

<http://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1359/Committee/21/Default.aspx>

Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22, Policy and Resources Committee, 30 October 2017, Item 7:

<http://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/638/Committee/21/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Children's Services Finance Monitoring Report, Children's Services Committee, 16 January 2018.

Officer Contact

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If you need this report in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Appendix 1 - 2018-19 Budget Timetable

Activity/Milestone	Time frame
County Council agree recommendations for 2017-20 including that further plans to meet the shortfall for 2018-19 to 2019-20 are brought back to Members during 2017-18	20 February 2017
Spring Budget 2017 announced	8 March 2017
Consider implications of service and financial guidance and context, and review / develop service planning options for 2018-20	March – June 2017
Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services to commission review of 2016-17 outturn and 2017-18 Period 2 monitoring to identify funding from earmarked reserves to support Children's Services budget.	June 2017
Member review of the latest financial position on the financial planning for 2018-20 (Policy and Resources Committee)	July 2017
Member review of budget planning position including early savings proposals	September – October 2017
Consultation on new planning proposals and Council Tax 2018-21	October to December 2017 / January 2018
Service reporting to Members of service and budget planning – review of progress against three year plan and planning options	November 2017
Chancellor's Autumn Budget 2017	TBC November / December 2017
Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement	TBC December 2017
Service reporting to Members of service and financial planning and consultation feedback	January 2018
Committees agree revenue budget and capital programme recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee	Late January 2018
Policy and Resources Committee agree revenue budget and capital programme recommendations to County Council	29 January 2018
Confirmation from Districts of council tax base and Business Rate forecasts	31 January 2018
Final Local Government Finance Settlement	TBC February 2018
County Council agree Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-19 to 2020-21, revenue budget, capital programme and level of Council Tax for 2018-19	12 February 2018

Appendix 2 - Findings of Public Consultation



Norfolk County Council

Your views on the future of our children's centre services and libraries

Overview

Norfolk County Council plays a huge part in people's lives – ensuring children and young people have the best start in life, protecting vulnerable people, maintaining a safe road system and helping to create a thriving economy. We'll continue to spend over a billion pounds every year providing public services that you, your family and friends use every day.

Norfolk is facing some big challenges though. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. And as you know, the cost of living is going up. As things become more expensive we also have higher costs, and the amount of money we have coming in isn't keeping up. At the same time the money that central government gives us has fallen by £189 million since 2011 and will fall to zero by 2021.

Even though we are proposing to increase council tax next year, the amount of money we hope to raise wouldn't be enough to balance our budget. This means we have to make some difficult decisions about how we spend your money.

Since 2011 we have saved £334 million. However, we now need to save a further £125 million by 2021. So we are looking again at the services we provide, how they work together, whether they are reaching the people who need them and where they are provided from. Our aim is to create services that meet the needs of residents living in different parts of Norfolk, rather than have a one-size fits all offer.

We are proposing to locate our services together in the same buildings wherever we can, to provide one-stop access to the County Council. In some places we might base more of our services in the same buildings as other organisations, such as district councils, health services and voluntary groups.

Why we are consulting

As part of this work we are looking at the future of our children's centre services. We want your views on:

- our proposal to review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk
- our proposal to focus children's centre services on the families that need them most
- our proposal for more of our children's centre services and libraries to share buildings.

Together we think these proposals would save us £5.5 million over the next three years.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

Your views will help us to decide the future of our children's centre services and libraries.

We are consulting through:

- Our online consultation – visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget to complete this consultation online.
- This paper copy of our consultation.

We are consulting from 6 November 2017 to 2 January 2018. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Background information

Children's centres offer all families with children under five a range of services, information and support in their local community. They also help some children aged 5-8 with the transition to school.

The support offered by each children's centre is based on the needs of the local community, but most offer advice about pregnancy, parenting support, play sessions, information about children's health, training courses for adults, as well as support finding specialist groups and services.

Some children's centre services are available to all families, such as play and stay sessions, and information, advice and guidance about parenting and other topics such as health services, training and jobs. Children's centres send information to all families registered with them about activities and services on offer locally, and this can include information about activities being run by other organisations, such as local charities and community groups.

Children's centres also provide some services which are for specific groups, for example sessions for new parents / carers or activities for children with disabilities. Children's centre staff plan these activities to help the families that they are working with at the time. So these activities are different depending on where you live and they change over time as the needs of families change.

Children's centre staff also work directly with families on a one-to-one basis. This might involve meeting with families in the children's centre or home visits. One-to-one sessions tend to be offered to families that need the most support. Sometimes this one-to-one support is used to coordinate the work of different organisations who are all supporting the same family, for example children's centres, social care teams and health visitors.

We have 53 children's centres, supporting families across the whole of Norfolk. Children's centre services are provided from a range of different buildings and locations:

- **In some areas all services are based in one children's centre building.** Whilst some of these children's centres are in purpose built venues, others are on school sites and some are in buildings they share with other organisations. Most of the children's centre's in urban areas have a dedicated building, because there are lots families living near to each other and so lots of people regularly going to activities at the children's centre building.
- **In other areas of Norfolk, children's centres have a base that they use to run activities, but they also offer services in village halls and community buildings.** This approach is used to provide services to families living in some of Norfolk's market towns and their surrounding villages.
- **In some areas there is no children's centre building, instead services are offered in different community buildings, such as village halls and community buildings.** This approach is used in urban and rural areas. It works well for rural communities, where

families are more spread out in different villages and there isn't one obvious place to have a children's centre building that all families could easily get to.

Having the service move around helps these families to attend activities and get support. In total we have 37 children's centre buildings. The size of the buildings and how they are used varies considerably.

Over 93% of all children aged 0-5 are currently registered with their local children's centre, which is over 41,000 children and over 33,000 families across Norfolk. We know that some families regularly go to their children's centre and use lots of our services, and that other families don't use children's centre services at all. Typically, three quarters of the children who are registered with their local children's centre use our services on at least three different occasions.

We have developed three proposals that we would like your views on. Together we think these proposals would save us £5.5 million over the next three years - £2 million in 2018/19, £3 million in 2019/20 and £0.5 million in 2020/21.

Our proposals

Proposal one – review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk

We are proposing review whether children's centre services are being provided in the most appropriate way in each area of Norfolk, or whether in some areas we should change the way they are provided.

We know that the needs of families across Norfolk vary considerably. We want to look at whether we can improve how children's centre services are provided, so that families get the right support, at the right time and in the right way.

Why do we want to review children's centre services now?

The review we want to do isn't just about helping the County Council save money, there are a number of other reasons we want to look at what children's centre services we offer and how they are provided:

We know that the needs of families across Norfolk vary considerably. We want to look at whether we can improve how children's centre services are provided, so that families get the right support, at the right time and in the right way.

Why do we want to review children's centre services now?

The review we want to do isn't just about helping the County Council save money, there are a number of other reasons we want to look at what children's centre services we offer and how they are provided:

- Since children's centres were established over a decade ago the needs of families have changed and the way that many parents / carers want to get support is different. Technology now plays a much bigger part in our lives. Parents / carers increasingly go online, open up an app or ask their peers for information and advice via WhatsApp, rather than go to a children's centre building. Our services need to adapt to how parents / carers want to get support.
- We know that some of the families who need the most support prefer to be supported at home, because they don't feel comfortable or confident enough to go to a children's centre building. We also know that some families prefer one-to-one sessions with a member of staff, rather than group activities. So we need to look at whether we have the right balance of activities taking place in dedicated children's centre buildings and one-to-one support for families.
- Over the last decade Norfolk has also changed. We've had new housing developments, some areas have had lots of money invested in them and families have moved around. As a result the demand for children's centre services has changed across Norfolk and we need to assess whether our buildings are in the right places and if they are all still required.
- There is also a shortage of pre-school, nursery and school places in some areas of Norfolk. So if families with young children could be better supported at home, in community buildings or online, then we could look at whether some children's centre buildings could be used to help families with childcare and their children's education.
- Our children's centres developed in quite an organic way, as funding became available and different opportunities arose. It therefore makes sense to look again at the services they are providing, the way they are supporting families and the buildings they are operating from to see whether we need to change anything.
- We have contracts with 12 other organisations to run our children's centres on our behalf, at a cost of approximately £10 million per year. All of the current contracts for running our children's centres end in March 2019, which means we have an opportunity to review what services our children's centres provide and how they operate.

What would our review look at?

To review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk we would have to consider a wide range of factors. We are proposing to look at:

- The number of people using each children's centre service

- The number of people going to each children’s centre building
- The needs of the families in different areas of Norfolk, including the level of deprivation
- Whether there are opportunities for children’s centres to share buildings with other services or organisations – see proposal 3 for more information
- How people get to children’s centre services and the transport options available
- The leasing arrangements for children’s centre buildings.

Our review would produce recommendations for each area of Norfolk, including whether an area needs a dedicated children’s centre building, if the children’s centre could share a building with another organisation or if services would be better provided in community buildings. It would also make recommendations about the types of services needed and different ways of supporting families across Norfolk and in each area.

It is too early to say how children’s centre services could change in different areas of Norfolk or what this would mean for each individual children’s centre building. Much more detailed work would need to be done to understand this. We would consult on any significant changes to how buildings are used, where services are delivered from and changes to the services on offer.

Proposal two – focusing children’s centre services on the families that need them most

Children’s centres provide a wide range of services. Some of these services are available to all families, such as play and stay sessions, and others are for families who need more support, for example families who are struggling with unemployment, substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental or physical health problems. The organisations who run our children’s centres each carry out a detailed analysis to identify vulnerable families.

The Sure Start Children’s Centre Statutory Guidance (2013) makes it clear that the service should be focused on helping families who need extra support:

“The core purpose of Children’s Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a “particular focus on families in greatest need of support” in order to reduce inequalities in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances”.

In 2015 we proposed to focus more of the work of our children’s centres on supporting the families that need them most. We consulted people on what they thought of our proposal. We received 291 responses about this proposal, of which 198 people (68.0%) agreed with the proposal and 61 people (21.0 %) disagreed. 32 (11.0%), neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal. Here is a summary of what people told us:

- Of those who expressed support for this proposal, two thirds did not give a reason for their support. Of those explaining their support, the largest number agreed that services should be better targeted. However a significant number that agreed with the proposal also argued that services should remain universal, providing a broad range of services. A smaller number of people stated that services need to change and needed to provide value for money.
- Of those who expressed opposition to the proposal, the majority stated that Children's Centres provided a universal, preventative service that should be protected and not cut. Some respondents argued that a more targeted approach would miss people that require support, who would then require more expensive services in the long run.

The County Council decided to go ahead with this proposal in February 2016. Since then we have worked with the organisations who run our children's centres to make some changes. Children's centre staff now work more closely with social care teams. The families they are both working with now receive more coordinated support. We've also seen that more of the activities which are available to all families are now being run by voluntary and community groups, instead of by children's centre staff. This has meant the staff can focus their time on the work with the families that need the most support. The changes we have made have saved us approximately £2.5 million.

Over the past 18 months we had a big push to encourage all families with young children to register with their children's centre. This has been very successful and it means that children's centre staff now come into contact with more families and so have a greater chance of identifying all the families that need extra support. This has also helped children's centres to build better connections with their local communities and we've seen parental satisfaction go up.

We are now proposing to look at what we can do to further improve children's centre services for the families that need them most. We want to look at ways of improving the plans we put in place to support families and how we share information between different organisations about the families we're working with.

In order to improve support to the vulnerable families and save money, we would need to look again at the services available to all families. This might mean that children's centres need to reduce how much they spend on services available to all families or change how they provide them, for example we want to increase the amount of support available for parents / carers online.

We would make sure that children's centre staff continue to work with health visitors, social care teams and others so that each family gets appropriate information, guidance and support.

What would proposals one and two mean for the people who use children's centre services?

We think that the impact of our proposals would be:

- Families that are most in need of support would receive better support that is coordinated between children's centre staff, health visitors and social care teams.
- It might mean that families have to go to different buildings to get children's centres services. For example we might have fewer dedicated children's centres and there might be more services provided in community buildings.
- It might mean that parents / carers have to pay for some of the activities run by children's centres that are currently offered to all families for free, or that some services would have to stop.
- We would need to work with the organisations that run our children's centres to strike the difficult balance between offering services that all families can use and working with families who need extra support. It is important that there are services which all families can use. One reason for this is that we know that the families who are most in need of support are more likely to accept help if it feels like all families are getting some kind of support and if there is no stigma attached to getting help.

We want to know what you think of these proposals, and we are also talking with the organisations that run our children's centres to discuss them. Your views will help county councillors to set our budget, help us to decide whether we should make any changes to our existing contracts with the organisations that run our children's centres, and help us decide what we should include in the new contracts for our children's centre services for 2019/20 onwards. Your views will help us understand what impact our proposals would have on the people who use our services and whether any groups of people would be disproportionately affected.

Proposal three – closer working between children's centre services and libraries

Norfolk has 47 libraries and eight mobile libraries. Our libraries welcome 3.4 million visitors a year, over 10 million online visitors and in 2016-17 our customers borrowed more than 4.9 million books, e-books, DVDs and other materials.

People of all ages use libraries and the service offers a wide range of activities and facilities, including free computer access and help to get online, community learning, literacy activities for children and adults, activities to support health and wellbeing and to reduce social isolation, baby and toddler rhymetimes, book groups, code clubs, work clubs, space for hire and online access to a wealth of knowledge and information.

We currently spend £8.5 million on libraries each year. 21% of the total population of the county have used a library in the last 12 months. 33% of children aged 0-5 in the county used a library in the same period.

We have previously asked people about the future of our library service:

- In 2013 we asked people what they thought of a proposal to make better use of our library buildings by sharing premises with other organisations.
- In 2015 we carried out some research about the future of the library service with library users, lapsed-users and people who do not use the library service.

The findings from this work told us that people are broadly supportive of libraries sharing buildings with other organisations.

People also broadly agree that libraries are a good place to provide a variety of support for families, such as parenting classes and family learning, and that it is good to encourage children to use the library service from a young age. We have used the findings from this work to develop this proposal, and to help us understand the impact it would have.

Many of our children's centres and libraries are located close to each other and they serve the same communities. The children's centres and libraries in Gorleston, Acle and Loddon are already located in the same building. We are proposing that more of our children's centres and libraries could share buildings in future. Because of the financial pressures we are facing we think that having these services located in their own buildings in communities across Norfolk is no longer sustainable.

We want it to be easy for residents to be able to get to and use our services. If more of our children's centres and libraries were to share buildings in future it would mean that these services could continue to be available across Norfolk and people would still be able to get to these services near to where they live. We think this is better than having to consider no longer providing some services in some communities, and for residents to have to travel further to get to our services.

We also know that reading with young children plays a vital role in their development. We believe that having more children's centres and libraries in the same building would encourage families to read more and help more children to be ready for school, which ultimately would improve their life chances.

Last year more than a third of books borrowed from Norfolk's libraries are taken out by children. In a national survey it was found that 1 in 3 children have no books in their home, 22% reported that they received no encouragement to read at home, and 90% of children who only read in class are either below average or average readers. The number of books in the home has as great an impact on a child's school attainment as parental education levels. Furthermore, a child aged 3-5 years who is taken to the library monthly is on average 2.5 months ahead in development terms than one who doesn't visit a library.

What would this proposal mean for residents and the people who use children's centre services and our libraries?

It is too early to say what this would mean for each individual children's centre and library. Much more detailed work would need to be done to understand this. We would consult on any significant changes to how buildings are used, where services are delivered from and changes to the services on offer.

We think that the impact of our proposal would be:

- Children's centre and library services could continue to be available across Norfolk and people would still be able to get to these services near to where they live, which is important in a large rural county like Norfolk.
- Having these services located together could help to improve children's literacy and life chances, by getting young children used to visiting a library and interested in reading and learning.
- Our library service would adapt to having more families visiting, for example by having more children's books available. This has happened in the three areas where our children's centres and libraries now share buildings.
- It might mean each service would have less space to operate. This would depend on how the space is currently being used in each of our buildings, whether there is any unused space or whether in some areas we could move both services into a different building that would provide the same amount of space that each service currently has.
- There could be greater demand for parking if more people were using our buildings for a greater range of services.
- We would need to carefully plan how the services would work together so that people could relax and enjoy using both services. For example, we wouldn't want library users disrupting a play and stay session, or there being too much noise for people trying to study in the library.
- We would need to coordinate the policies and practices of the children's centres and libraries in order to keep the people using both services safe.
-

Your views on our proposals

1. What do you think about our proposal to review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk? What impact, if any, do you think that the proposal would have on you or your family?

Please write your answer below:

2. What do you think about our proposal to focus children’s centre services on the families that need them most? What impact, if any, do you think that the proposal would have on you or your family?

Please write your answer below:

3. What do you think about our proposal for children’s centres and libraries to share buildings and work more closely together? What impact, if any, do you think that the proposal would have on you or your family?

Please write your answer below:

4. Please select all of the descriptions that apply to you?

- I am a parent / carer of a child (or children) aged 0-5
- I currently use children's centre services
- I currently use the library service
- I am a children's centre worker
- I work for an organisation that operates from a children's centre
- I work for the library service
- None of the above

5. If you currently use a children's centre, which one do you usually use? Please select one from the list below:

- Acle (Marshes) Children's Centre
- Attleborough Area Childrens Centre
- Aylsham Cluster Area Children's Centre

Bowthorpe, West Earlham and Costessey Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caister Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
City and Eaton Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corpusty and Holt Area Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cromer Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dereham Central Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dereham South Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diss Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Downham Market Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drayton and Taverham Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dussindale Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Earlham Early Years Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
East City and Framingham Earl Area Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emneth Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fakenham Gateway Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gorleston and Hopton Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greenacre Children's Centre, Peggotty Road, Great Yarmouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harleston Area Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hellesdon Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hethersett Area Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hoveton & Broadland Area Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hunstanton Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Litcham Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loddon Area Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Long Stratton Area Childrens Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Methwold Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mundesley Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nar Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
North City Children's Centre, Angel Road Infant School	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Lynn, Gaywood North Bank and The Woottons Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Walsham Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priory Children's Centre, Great Yarmouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reepham Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seagulls Children's Centre, Gorleston	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spixworth & Sprowston Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
St Clement's Children's Centre, Terrington St Clement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stalham and Sutton Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stibbard Children's Centre, Fakenham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thetford Children's Centre, Kingsway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thetford Drake Children's Centre, Drake Infant School & Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swaffham Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thorpe Hamlet and Heartsease Children's Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trinity Children's Centre, Martham	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Vancouver Children's Centre, King's Lynn | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Village Green Children's Centre, Belton | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Watton Children's Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wells-next-the-sea Children's Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| West Walton Children's Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wymondham Area Children's Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |

About you

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We use this information to see how representative the feedback is of Norfolk's population. We also use it to see if any particular groups of people are especially affected by our proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. Under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years.

We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation, including any personal information. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

6. Are you responding as...?

Please select one answer

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| An individual / member of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A family | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a voluntary or community group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a statutory organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- On behalf of a business
- A Norfolk County Councillor
- A district or borough councillor
- A town or parish councillor
- A Norfolk County Council employee

7. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

8. Are you...?

Please select one answer

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

9. How old are you?

Please select one answer

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Under 18 <input type="checkbox"/> | 55-64 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18-24 <input type="checkbox"/> | 65-74 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-34 <input type="checkbox"/> | 75-84 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35-44 <input type="checkbox"/> | 85 or older <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45-54 <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/> |

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10. Do you have any long-term illness disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

Please select one answer

Yes No Prefer not to say **11. How would you describe your ethnic background?**

Please select one answer

White British White Irish White other Mixed Asian or Asian British Black or Black British Chinese Prefer not to say Other ethnic background - please describe below **12. What is your first language?**

Please write your answer in the box:

13. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)

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Please write your answer in the box:

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings to this consultation to our Children's Services committee on 16 January 2018. The report will feedback what people have told us about the potential impact of our proposal. The feedback will also be reported at Full Council on 12 February 2018. Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

You can fill in our online feedback form at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

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If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

November 2017

Findings of Public Consultation

Your views on the future of our children's centre services and libraries

Respondent information

Respondent Numbers

There were **335** responses received to this consultation. Of these, just over half (**172 people or 51%**) replied as individuals.

Responding as:			
An individual / member of the public	172	51%	
A family	105	31%	
On behalf of a voluntary or community group	7	2%	
On behalf of a statutory organisation	12	4%	
On behalf of a business	1	0%	
A Norfolk County Councillor	2	1%	
A district or borough councillor	0	0%	
A town or parish councillor	7	2%	
A Norfolk County Council employee	19	6%	
Not Answered	10	3%	
Total	335	100%	

Of the **335** responses received, the majority (**316 or 94%**) were online submissions to the consultation.

How we received the responses

Online submission	316	94%
Email	16	5%
Consultation paper feedback form	3	1%
Total	335	100%

Responses by groups, organisations and businesses

10 respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a group, organisation or business, but not all gave the names of their organisations, some were residents whose response did not necessarily represent the organisational view. The organisations cited were:

- Cromer, Mundesley, and North Walsham Childrens Centre
- Action for Children
- Emneth Children's Centre
- NCH&C
- Sure Start Children's Centre
- Home-start Norfolk
- Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby Parish Council

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn play grow Norwich 		
Relationship of respondent to service (respondents could choose as many as applicable)		
I am a parent / carer of a child (or children) aged 0-5	139	42%
I currently use children's centre services	128	38%
I currently use the library service	197	59%
I am a children's centre worker	45	13%
I work for an organisation that operates from a children's centre	10	3%
I work for the library service	4	1%
None of the above	54	16%
Not Answered	24	7%

Responses by groups, organisations and businesses

Twelve respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a statutory organisation. The organisations cited are:

- Acle Children's Centre staff team
- Caister Children's Centre staff team
- City Locality Norfolk Healthy Child Programme
- Cromer Town Council
- NCH&C
- NHS Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group
- Ormiston
- Shipdham Parish Council
- Snettisham Parish Council
- South Norfolk Council
- Stalham Town Council
- Trinity Children's Centre staff team

The statutory organisations expressed the following views:

- It is good practice to review any service periodically and children's centre services need to adapt to changes in the way people live their lives.
- There is a lot of value in providing some children's centre services which all families can use – universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.
- A few of the organisations were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, but they did include some caveats. For example, they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected. It was suggested co-location with libraries works well when each service has its own designated space.
- Some said they felt it would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services because there would not be enough space for both

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services or the buildings would not have the right facilities. They were also concerned that the two services would be too different to share buildings.

- They suggested a few ideas, including looking for more opportunities for joint working and collaboration with health services and exploring co-locating with other organisations, such as having more children's services co-located with schools.

Seven respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a voluntary or community group. The groups are:

- Action for Children
- Belton Church Foodbank
- Community Action Norfolk
- Home-start Norfolk
- Little Discoverers, West Norfolk School for Parents Charity

The voluntary and community groups expressed the following views:

- They were worried that families living in rural areas would be negatively affected by the proposed changes to children's centre and library services, in particular they were worried about people having to travel further to get to services.
- There is a lot of value in providing some children's centre services which all families can use – universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.
- A few of the groups were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, but they did include some caveats. For example they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected.
- Some said they felt it would not be appropriate for children's centres and libraries to share buildings because they offer very different services, in particular people raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families in libraries which are public buildings.

Two respondents told us they were Norfolk County Councillors. One councillor was concerned about potential reduction in funding for the mobile library service. The other councillor was concerned about the impact on families of the proposed reduction in funding for children's centres. They felt that the County Council should continue to fund children's centres rather than spend money building new roads.

Seven respondents told us they were town and parish councillors. They expressed the following views:

- Four of the councillors said they felt it is good practice to review any service periodically.
- Three of the councillors were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, with one adding the proviso that there should be no reduction

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in the number of libraries. They thought this proposal would save money in the long-run and support children's literacy.

Nineteen respondents told us they were Norfolk County Council employees. This includes a few people who work at children's centres and some who use children's centres. They expressed the following views:

- Many of the employees said it is good practice to review any service periodically and children's centre services need to adapt to changes in the way people live their lives.
- Fifteen of the nineteen employees said that it is important to provide some children's centre services which all families can use. They said universal services enable staff to build a relationship with families and identify who needs targeted support – some of the respondents noted that it is not just families on low incomes who need targeted support. Many of the respondents also said universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.
- Many of the employees could see the benefits of children's centres and libraries sharing buildings, but their support for the proposal did include some caveats, for example they said they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected. They thought that each area would need to be looked at on case-by-case basis. It was suggested co-location with libraries works well when each service has its own designated space.
- A majority of employees said they felt it would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services, because there would not be enough space for both services or the buildings would not have the right facilities. They were also concerned that the two services would be too different to share buildings, in particular employees raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families in libraries which are public buildings.
- Several employees were worried that our proposals would make it more difficult for families to get to children's centre or library services. They worried that families would be left isolated and that this would be bad for the mental health and wellbeing of parents / carers and children.

A response by Brandon Lewis MP was also received in which he said he thought we could find some savings without really affecting the services provided to families and that access to these essential services needs to be maintained, particularly for those living in more rural towns and villages, where children's centres and libraries act as community hubs.

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Summary of main themes			
Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of times mentioned	Quotes
Children’s centre services are valued and viewed as essential or a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents said that they regard children’s centres as a vital part of the community and families really value the support offered • Some respondents said that children’s centre services are key to supporting vulnerable families • Some respondents said we should be investing more in children’s centre services 	142	<p>“Having somewhere to go where you feel comfortable to talk to people with knowledge of childrens early years is irreplaceable.”</p> <p>“Having the Children’s centre to go to for breast feeding cafe and their other groups was a life line for me, as unlike other parent groups I knew it was a safe zone where I would have the support of professionals and I wouldn’t have been judged.”</p> <p>“Children's Centres are integral to the local community and are well used by families from all area's and needs.”</p> <p>“This is a devastating blow to local communities and vulnerable families who rely on children centres for help in accessing the services they need.”</p> <p>“The children centres are holding many families that do not meet thresholds for further support however are border line safeguarding which make these children extremely vulnerable.”</p> <p>“I feel that funding needs to be increased to enable staff to continue their excellent work and provide community links to families who may feel isolated or who are vulnerable.”</p> <p>“My boyfriend signed up for the maths course which had a creche, enabling both of us to study while my daughter was happily playing. He took his reference from the maths tutor and gained a place on a vocational course which took him to a paid</p>

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			<p>job in a primary school, none of which he could have done without the confidence and free help he got at the centre.”</p>
<p>Children’s centre services should be reviewed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good practice to regularly review services and to see how they could be improved • How people live their lives has changed, so children’s centre services need to change too • The current set of contracts will end soon and this provides a good opportunity to review services • Some people who said they support a review taking place, added that they would like to see the outcome of the review before deciding whether they agree with our proposals or not 	<p>111</p>	<p>“I believe a review of Children’s Centre services would be a positive step. Assessing need according to locality might help to identify where services are under/over subscribed.”</p> <p>“I believe that a review is needed, as times change but our service specifications haven’t changed to keep up.”</p> <p>“I am happy that a review is going to happen as it is important that the budget/finances are used for the biggest impact and to benefit the most people.”</p> <p>“Good idea, we need more services that focus on helping and supporting the families but in the local village halls, not in children centre building where many people do not want to go.”</p> <p>“I think all services should be reviewed to ensure residents are receiving value for money. The impact would depend on the findings and subsequent action.”</p>
<p>Face-to-face support for families is important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing more information online could be a useful addition, but does not replace the need for face-to-face support • Parents / carers value the social interaction of face-to-face support and the opportunity to meet new people who are in a similar situation to them 	<p>24</p>	<p>“Online information in no way can replace the kind of advice and support available from a children’s centre, and I strongly feel should only be supplied in addition.”</p> <p>“The children’s centres are amazing and I have been relying on them so much with both my children. The idea that an app or WhatsApp could in any way replace what they provide is ridiculous. Getting out of the house, meeting other parents and children is so important. You can feel so lonely as a new parent!”</p>

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			<p>“I would not have known any peers to befriend and then feel confident messaging for advice had there not been play and stay groups and similar at the local children’s centre.”</p>
<p>Some families could afford or would be happy to pay a small amount towards the cost of children’s centre services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people suggested introducing small charges or allowing families to make a donation in order to keep services running • The sorts of services that respondents said families could pay for or that they would be happy to contribute towards were stay and play sessions, baby massage classes and baby yoga 	31	<p>“All new moms feel alone and benefit from a good supportive postnatal group which should be free. But it’s ok to charge from other activity sessions- I’m currently attending a baby yoga class which I’m happy to pay for as it’s run really well.”</p> <p>“For us money is a big constraint on the activities we undertake, a donation of £1-2 is a manageable amount for us per group, but many groups offered by other enterprises are much more than this and so we therefore to not attend them.”</p> <p>“Perhaps some groups or activities could have nominal charges per family (say 50p) in order to help towards costs. However I think charging for most services would mean people would not access the support they need.”</p> <p>“You could ask for a donation or membership or some other subtle way of keeping services free for those who need them.”</p> <p>“I feel that more financially better off families should be able to contribute toward some courses such as Baby massage.”</p>
<p>Some families are worried about the financial implications of our proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some families are worried they wouldn’t be able to afford to pay to attend groups or to pay more to get to children’s centre services if they were delivered in a library or another location that was further away 	32	<p>“Some parents couldn’t afford bus fares / cope with taking a couple of buses each way to get to other venues around town to get help.”</p> <p>“Whilst on maternity leave I can’t afford to pay for toddler groups so without the centre my children would not have any social interaction with other children. I suffer post natal</p>

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			<p>depression and anxiety, and find the centre one of the only places I feel comfortable in taking the children when I'm low."</p> <p>"The targeted families we work with are so isolated, this would have such a negative impact on their lives as some of the families can't afford to pay for internet and have no vehicle to drive to other parts of the county....they would be left with nothing!"</p>
<p>Some families are worried that our proposals would make it more difficult to get to children's centre or library services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some families are worried that our proposals would make it more difficult for them to get to children's centre or library services, for example if the services were co-located in a building that is further away from them • Respondents were particularly concerned about families living in rural communities 	48	<p>"The Village Green Childrens Centre offers many services to families living in Belton and the surrounding villages who would have difficulty travelling into town for support in Gorleston / Great Yarmouth as public transport provided is neither reliable or cheap."</p> <p>"I can't get to the library easy it's 2 buses away. I've got 4 children 1 in nursery."</p> <p>"We do not have a library in the village, so for our parents this would mean a bus journey in to town. Buses do not serve the village very often particularly evenings for classes. There is no public car park near to the library and a local supermarket car park to there offers 2 hrs maximum stay."</p>
<p>Our proposals would have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people said that our proposals would have a negative impact on families • Several respondents said that they feared families would be left isolated and that this would be bad for the mental health and 	133	<p>"Truly frightening. Simply put, reducing the budget for children's services by 50% will have a damaging effect on all Norfolk families."</p> <p>"I think it's madness. In total, changing Childrens Centre provision might save £5m - this is a drop in the ocean of the £125m needed and yet the negative impact on families will be huge."</p>

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	<p>wellbeing of parents / carers and children</p>		<p>“The current services provided by Diss children's centre have been a fundamental part of raising my young family. Without this service I would have been isolated and struggled a great deal with some of the early stages of parenting and socialising.”</p> <p>“The centre is a place were they feel welcome and they know that they wont be judged. Parents and their children get to meet other families and are able to play and socialize, all of this making them feel empowered and less isolated.”</p>
<p>All families should be offered children's centre services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of people said that there need to be some universal services • Some respondents said there should be no reduction in the universal offer • Some respondents said there needs to be a universal offer, but that it could be reduced slightly • Several respondents said that having fewer universal services would make it harder for families to get help early on and before problems escalate, so families would end-up needing more intensive and costly support because they would end-up in crisis (this was mentioned 96 times) 	<p>212</p>	<p>“It seems like this policy is expecting the most vulnerable to simply turn up at the children's centres and ask for help. I can honestly say from our experience that this is not how things work. The most vulnerable are also the most depressed/socially excluded. It is only through the universal groups that these vulnerable parents are encouraged to interact with the centre staff where they can be identified and given the tailored care they desperately need.”</p> <p>“The balance between targeted and universal services is crucial. If there is no early intervention then the number of children receiving statutory intervention will continue to increase, this will increase the cost to the local authority. Removing budget from this service is short sighted.”</p> <p>“Targeted family support work is over subscribed at our Children's Centre and having universal groups enables us to provide an offer to families whilst they wait for support. Furthermore, universal groups act as a 'step down' for families and enables us to keep in touch with one another and monitor progress. If we didn't have these groups nobody would be able to identify when difficulties begin to arise again for a family.”</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few respondents said that having fewer universal services would result in costs being passed on to other departments or organisations (this was mentioned nine times) • It is difficult to identify which families need support – it is not just families on low incomes – the needs of families change over time and it is easier to provide support if families have built up a trusting relationship with staff from having attended universal groups (this was mentioned 96 times) 	<p>“I think services should be available to everyone. Every child and family deserves equal opportunities and access to support if they feel they need it.”</p> <p>“As a parent that felt anxious about attending groups after a difficult birth it would have been easy to stay at home and hide but the universal baby group helped get us out the house and talking to the practitioners for advice.”</p> <p>“It is important to remember that you do not always need to be on a low income or live in an area of deprivation to be struggling and needing support. Many of our parents find parenting difficult and they feel isolated for many reasons.”</p> <p>“How would they know who these families are? Do they wear signs? I know I didn’t and I needed the children’s centre more than most!”</p> <p>“Narrowing the reach of services runs considerable risk of missing some of those in need. Selecting only those perceived to be in need could also stigmatise those families. Furthermore, ensuring a broad mix of users offers more opportunity for the 'nudge' effect of seeing how other people manage family life.”</p> <p>“Parents learn from how they see other parents acting towards and around their children just as much as from the trained staff. To invite only one group could be seen as labelling or condescending. It could be seen as a place where only poor or bad parents were invited and so become a negative rather than positive experience.”</p>
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		<p>“Needs them most’ is not helping those that just need them. What happens to them - do they wait until they the get worse and then ‘need them most’?”</p> <p>“Also services available to all in the community helps integration and building a community.”</p> <p>“There is a wealth of evidence that providing early preventative services for families in the crucial first two years of a child's life is key to influencing better outcomes and life chances. This is where the expertise of children’s centres excels as a universal service.”</p> <p>“If you target services too much, and completely strip back services to just targeted work, children will start to slip though the net and be missed as all professionals know, that children of concern are identified in universal services. It is also known that families of concern will purposely avoid official targeted services as they do not trust children's services.”</p> <p>“The breastfeeding support group is an example of a service which cannot be targeted at certain families as breastfeeding mothers all need support without exception.”</p> <p>“I was identified by my Children’s Centre as a vulnerable parent who needed help. This intervention turned my life around, saved my life and my family from mental breakdown. ... However, this would all have gone by unknown if I had not attended 2 universal groups at the Centre for 4-5 months before things started to unravel. ... From first hand experience I can tell you that whilst the interventions have helped me in the short term, it is attending the universal groups that have helped me in the long term.”</p>
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<p>Children’s centre services should be focused on the families that need them most</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County Council has less money and so it is right or sensible that we should focus our resources on the families that need support the most • More affluent families could afford to pay for the services that they currently get from their children’s centre for free 	<p>48</p>	<p>“Given limited resources it is best to focus childrens centre services on familes that need them most.”</p> <p>“I think it is obvious that with limited funds available, they should be directed at those who need them the most.”</p> <p>“I agree these services should be more targeted. The centre I attended was mainly accessed by middle class parents from adjoining areas.”</p> <p>“I think in principle this is a good idea as there are more private groups available for those with resources to attend.”</p> <p>“Good idea. Why are we spending money on people who don't need it 7yrs into the cuts?”</p> <p>“most vulnerable children are eligible for free early years childcare, so have ongoing access to services. Beyond the age of two it therefore makes sense for children's centre services to be much more targeted.”</p>
<p>Our proposals would negatively affect rural communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents were worried that families living in rural areas would be negatively affected by changes to children’s centre services 	<p>62</p>	<p>“I worry that the rural communities and those who find it hard to leave the house will be worse off as a result of the review.”</p> <p>“Having regular contact and daily access to a local support centre is invaluable to a rural community. Without this services families including my own are isolated and vulnerable.”</p> <p>“A review is important of course but once more the villages miss out. Loddon is our nearest centre from Ditchingham which is about six miles with no bus route direct.”</p>

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			<p>“I think making cuts to services that offer support to children and families would be a real shame. North Norfolk is a rural area and it can be very easy for families to become isolated.”</p> <p>“In rural Norfolk we have little facilities as it is, don’t take even more away by combining two good but distinct resources and making each one the poorer for it.”</p>
<p>It is a good ideas for children’s centres and libraries to share buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several people expressed support for the two services sharing buildings, for example because it would help to get children reading or because it would help to make both services viable • A few people said that it works well in Acle where the children’s centre and library already share a building • Several people said they support the proposal but with caveats, for example they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected • Some people said that each area would need to be looked at on a case by case basis (this was mentioned 46 times) 	<p>168</p>	<p>“A brilliant idea! Hopefully it would encourage more parents to read with their children and mean the excellent services offered by the children's centres could continue. I'd hate to see centres fully close.”</p> <p>“I think it would be a great idea to assist with imagination and reading skills.”</p> <p>“There could be good synergies by combining services within the same buildings. Perhaps this may allow more weekend opening hours for libraries.”</p> <p>“In the age of budget cuts, sharing facilities is definitely the way forward.</p> <p>“I think that this would be a good idea if it means saving our libraries.”</p> <p>“A good idea if appropriate buildings are available.”</p> <p>“This sounds like a good idea if space permits and doesn't limit activities such as messy play. We already enjoy our libraries bounce and rhyme time.”</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

			<p>“In my opinion only libraries that have a large and suitable separate space and outdoor space for a children’s centre would be appropriate.”</p> <p>“If a building is big enough I don’t see a problem but you shouldn’t cut either service just to squeeze them in.”</p> <p>“Happy with this if the affect on the service is fully considered and not drastically reduced. Better to utilise all of 1 building than pay for two half used ones.”</p> <p>"Sharing with a library works at Acle because the children’s centre has its own designated space. Without separate space this could be less effective. Children's Centre services require different spaces to libraries.”</p> <p>“I feel this is a good idea. We regularly visit Acle library which is already doing so, and our local Childrens centre of Martham work closely with the Library.”</p> <p>“Where we had capital to build an extension for the Children's Centre at Acle this worked very well but where we fitted into space within the Gorleston library it was less successful. There are practical considerations. Ofsted were not happy with safeguarding concerns over access to toilets and their use by the general public.”</p>
<p>It would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children’s centre and library services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many respondents were concerned that our existing estate would not be suitable and said that we should not try to put both services into our existing 	<p>151</p>	<p>“Watton Library is far too small for the Children's Centre is be based there. There wouldn't be the space to be able to run the sessions that the Children's Centre currently offer.”</p> <p>“I cannot visualise how groups and activities could successfully run from libraries. I feel storage and space to run groups</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

	<p>children’s centre or library buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents were concerned that the buildings would not have the right facilities, for example a couple of people questioned if you put a children’s centre into one of our libraries would it have room for baby change facilities • A few respondents were concerned that there would not be enough parking for everyone • A couple of people raised concerns about the cost of adapting buildings so that they work for both services and questioned how much money this proposal would save 	<p>would be an issue and this would limit the number of activities available to families on a daily basis. I also don't feel that library buildings (if used) would have the right facilities for crèche provision.”</p> <p>“Placing them in the same building wouldn’t work here in the city where our Children’s Centre is already so busy that they sometimes have to turn people away from groups that are at capacity.”</p> <p>“Libraries are not particularly welcoming and the buildings are not child friendly. The buildings are older and don't feel as welcoming.”</p> <p>“It would impact us if the library space was reduced to make space available for the children's centre to move in. Reducing space available for the library is not a positive move forwards.”</p> <p>“If the library were just used to host groups, then this already occurs at many libraries, Bounce and Rhyme groups in particular. Would there be space in libraries for a sensory room? Or a breastfeeding cafe? Also a crèche/play room? All services that my family very much value at the children's centre.”</p> <p>“There are many libraries which are currently in very small spaces and I don’t think any library should lose space that is currently used for library provision. If there happened to be rooms unused in a library that would be large enough for a children’s centre to operate from it then why not but I suspect that there are very few libraries where this is the case. Are you going to build brand new purpose built centres to house both library and children's Centre? If yes then great go for it!”</p>
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Findings of Public Consultation

			<p>“Parking is already an issue at the Children's Centre and at the Libraries - will more parking space be made available if the services co-locate in one building in all areas?”</p> <p>“I feel that in order for this to work, the money that would need to be ploughed into the spaces would be ridiculous and the whole point of this is to try and save money.”</p> <p>“People often come into the Children's Centre to seek help and and can be in a state of great distress. Staff are able to take them to a confidential space to offer support. I suspect people would not feel comfortable entering the library to access support in the same way.”</p> <p>“Libraries would not be able to offer the outside garden space that some Children Centres can offer such as Emneth – and also the big equipment that is used in the garden such as play kitchens, herb gardens, logs and other natural explorative play items, in the actual surroundings rather than being brought inside and looked at out of context.”</p> <p>“I can just see well equipped, fit for purpose Children's Centres being sold off and everyone having to 'make-do' and double up in buildings that serve a multi-purpose.”</p>
<p>It would not be appropriate for children’s centres and libraries to share buildings because they offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families from a shared children’s centre and library building – libraries are public buildings that anyone can enter, whereas some children’s 	<p>140</p>	<p>“While amalgamating the services appears a sensible option there a number of issues such as confidentiality, safeguarding and physical space. By definition Library's are public spaces and any member of the public can access them. Children's Centres on the other hand are targeted at children and families and there is a level of safeguarding built into the Centres. There is a danger that children could inadvertently be put at</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

<p>very different services</p>	<p>centre services need privacy and respondents questioned how this balance could be achieved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several parents and carers said they would not feel comfortable going to a shared building for noisy or messy group activities – and a few library users said they do not think it would be appropriate either and that they prefer a calmer environment to study or look for jobs • A few people said that parents and carers might not want to go to a building shared with a library if they struggle with reading 	<p>risk if services such as baby/child health clinics/child access visits/targetted groups are offered at such a public venue.”</p> <p>“If I want to breastfeed my baby I would feel uncomfortable doing so in a library. I would also feel that in a crisis it would be too public.”</p> <p>“There would need to be a designated area for the Children's Centre where confidentiality can be respected for families that may seek support from the CC for sensitive issues.”</p> <p>“It should also be taken into account that adults in vulnerable families are often uncomfortable in more public arenas and may feel pressured into accessing library facilities, which can pose an issue of there is a background involving illiteracy.”</p> <p>“Sessions such as Stay and Play require an outside area and many of the activities are too busy/noisy to be held in a library.”</p> <p>“We use the children's' centre for support and groups specifically for children with additional needs. The idea of trying to run groups for these children (who are not necessarily easily accepted in 'normal' society) in a space designed for peaceful study and reflection, doesn't really work.”</p> <p>“It often takes a lot of work with the more vulnerable families to build confidence to come into services in the safety of a children's centre, and this happens precisely because it is somewhere that is focusing on their needs, and not a totally public space. ... Children's centre staff are experts in recognising where parents are struggling, and engaging sensitively to encourage such families into services. This, and</p>
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Findings of Public Consultation

			<p>most importantly the primacy of the child's needs, could get lost in the attempt to provide everything under one roof.”</p>
<p>Ideas suggested by respondents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few people suggested other services which they thought could be co-located, these included libraries and adult education, children’s centres and services for older people, and more children’s centres and schools • A couple of people suggested that children’s centre staff could provide training to other professionals about working with young children • A couple of people suggested that we could reduce the amount of resource we use to monitor the performance of children’s centres or we that we should put less focus on increasing the number of families who register with their children’s centre • A couple of respondents said more should be done to support parents / carers to provide each other with peer support 	<p>42</p>	<p>“Sharing spaces with primary schools might be a better fit where available as most have better safeguarding set ups.”</p> <p>“Have you also considered using older people’s care homes to provide services for families particularly in rural areas. Research shows that exposing young children to older people and vice versa is good for both.”</p> <p>“Have sessions in other unusual places (e.g. retirement homes) also been considered?”</p> <p>“In most areas where NCC has a significant presence (libraries, children centres, fire stations) there are already a range of community buildings and consideration should be given to how all community assets can be utilised effectively. Equally, public sector premises tend to be located in more populous areas which again creates issues of rural access.”</p> <p>“I think what would be better would be to use existing children’s centre staff to instead help other local groups improve their groups by advising on good activities and resources. This is because they are run by enthusiastic committed people but they often don’t have the relevant early years knowledge to deliver good quality sessions.”</p> <p>“Children's centre staff training the library staff.”</p> <p>“More should also be done to support pairing up families with other families who could offer support.”</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One organisation said that we should look for more opportunities for joint working and collaboration with health services • One person suggested that if children’s centres and libraries shared buildings then we could extend the opening hours of libraries • One person suggested that children’s centres charge the other organisations who use rooms in their buildings • One person suggested that universal children’s centre services could be delivered from libraries and targeted services from children’s centres 		<p>“NHS Norwich CCG would like to ensure that community health services and health stakeholders are involved and engaged in the remodelling of this service, to seek opportunities for the co-location of staff and that services collaborate for the overall benefit of services provided to children and families.”</p> <p>“Is it worth considering universal services being offered from libraries and targeted services being offered from fewer Children's Centre buildings.”</p> <p>“I can see the benefits of maintaining lead CCs in areas of high deprivation with other CCs becoming linked satellites and sharing buildings and working more closely with libraries, health and/or leisure centres.”</p> <p>“The library in Swaffham is too small. A small extension to the Community Centre (a community hub already) to accommodate them both would be really innovative!!”</p>
<p>Challenge to the thinking behind the proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents challenged the thinking behind our proposals, in particular people were concerned that we have included a figure for how much we could save before we have carried out any review of our services 	<p>60</p>	<p>“To undertake a review in the light of a predetermined level of cuts is effectively limiting the range of possible outcomes.”</p> <p>“This “proposal to review” sounds more like a cost cutting exercise which you have already costed as saving the county council £5.5 million. If the review demonstrates that more resources would benefit the development of children would the finance be found?”</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

			<p>“I am concerned that a review without clear objectives in relation to quality, outcomes and output will just become a cuts exercise.”</p>
<p>Comments about the consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people were concerned that we would not listen to or act upon the responses to the consultation, or were critical of the consultation because they felt there was not enough information 	<p>21</p>	<p>“How can I assess the impact on my area if we have not had the review and I don't know which are affected?”</p> <p>“Council should have the integrity and decency to set out detailed proposals rather than vaguely-worded 'common-sense' general statements dressed up as public consultation.”</p> <p>“Consultation is a means to enable parents to feel involved in a decision but it's likely that any option will be detrimental as services will be reduced.”</p>

Findings of Public Consultation

Additional responses

List responses received in addition to the standard format (eg. petitions, postcard campaigns, letters) and summarise main points

We also received a petition from Norfolk County Labour Party signed by 5,792 people. The wording of the petition is:

Protect Norfolk 'Sure Start' Children's Centres

My local children's centre was a life-saver when my daughter was a baby and toddler. It was motivation to leave the house, to keep some structure to the day and to be able to seek advice in a non-threatening environment. I felt out of my depth as a new parent and the advice and support I received was invaluable. My daughter really benefited from activities with other children, and I was able to maintain some kind of social support network. I'm passionate about the excellent work our children's centres do and the difference they make to the lives of families in Norfolk. It's in everyone's interest that children in Norfolk are happy, safe and reaching their potential. Our children's centres play a crucial role in this. That's why I'm asking you to support this petition.....

We the undersigned value our 'sure start' centres and believe that the proposal to remove 50% (£5 million) from the budget for Norfolk's Children's Centres is a false economy that will harm the life chances of children and families in Norfolk. In particular we are concerned about the risks of increased isolation and poor parental mental health, as children's centres have also had a proven positive impact on these issues.

We think it is nonsense that the service will be "improved" by having half of its budget slashed.

Research into the early years has found that for every £1 spent on quality early care and education saves taxpayers £13 in future costs [1]

We believe that our Children's Centres should:

- Remain a universal, non-stigmatising, service accessible equally to all Norfolk families
- Continue to provide enhanced, targeted support to families most in need
- Continue to provide services through both outreach and in local child-centred community buildings
- Provide activities and support that ALL remain free to access

We call on the County Council to:

Abandon the proposal to remove 50% of funding from our children's centres and commit to protect this budget. To not do so is a false economy that will just 'shunt' cost on to other services and undermine the excellent progress made locally in 'school readiness' and early years outcomes.

[1] ref: Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013) The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socioeconomic disadvantage).

Findings of Public Consultation

<https://www.change.org/p/norfolk-county-council-protect-norfolk-sure-start-children-s-centres>

Norfolk County Council Labour Group organised and promoted their own separate consultation. They described this consultation proposal as: “Slash the budget for Children’s Centres by 50% but not saying which ones will close or who will lose services. Vague language about remodelling and targeting those in need. This also hides plans to cut Library services without saying where or how. Mobile libraries threatened.”

Eighty one of the responses contained comments relating to this proposal. Respondents told us they really value children’s centres and libraries (including mobile libraries) and regard them as key services or essential (28 mentions), some said that they disagree with our proposals (20 mentions) and that these services should not be cut (21 mentions). Some respondents said they felt concerned about the impact on rural communities (20 mentions). Some respondents were critical of the Norfolk County Council consultation for not providing enough information (24 mentions).

Produced by Stakeholder and Consultation Team
ConsultationTeam@norfolk.gov.uk



Children's Services budget proposals 2018 - 2019

Equality and rural assessments – findings and recommendations

January 2018

Lead officer: Equality & Diversity Manager (Jo Richardson), in consultation with Acting Assistant Director Early Help & Prevention (Sarah Jones) and Senior Accountant - Children's Services (Bruce Connors)

This assessment helps you to consider the impact of service changes on people with protected characteristics and in rural areas. The assessment can be updated at any time to inform service planning and commissioning.

For help or more information please contact Equality & Diversity team, email: equality@norfolk.gov.uk or tel: 01603 222611.

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

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Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

The purpose of equality and rural assessments

1. The key aim, with both equality and rural assessments, is to enable elected members to consider the potential impact of decisions on different people and communities prior to decisions being taken. Mitigating actions can then be developed if adverse impact is identified.
2. It is not always possible to adopt the course of action that will best promote the needs of people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. However, assessments enable informed decisions to be made, that take into account every opportunity to minimise disadvantage.

The Legal context

3. Public authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider the implications of proposals on people with protected characteristics. The Act states that public bodies must pay due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Actⁱ;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristicⁱⁱ and people who do not share itⁱⁱⁱ;
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it^{iv}.
4. The full Act is available [here](#).

The assessment process

5. This assessment comprises three phases:
 - **Phase 1** – we gather evidence on the proposals – looking at the people who might be affected, the findings of related assessments and public consultation, contextual information about local areas and populations and other relevant data. Where appropriate, we engage with residents, service users and stakeholders to better understand any issues that must be taken into account.
 - **Phase 2** – we analyse all the results. We make sure that any impacts highlighted by residents and stakeholders inform the final assessment. If the evidence indicates that the proposal may impact adversely on people with protected characteristics, mitigating actions are identified.
 - **Phase 3** –when completed, the findings are reported to service committees, to enable any issues to be taken into account before a decision is made.

Children's Services 2018-2019 budget proposals

6. Children's Services Committee has put forward five budget proposals for 2018-2019:

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

	Title of proposal	Description
1.	Reduction in legal expenses	<p>Improvements are being made to the robustness of social work decision making, and it is expected that this will lead to social workers only engaging legal services at the most appropriate time.</p> <p>Guidance to social workers will be updated to provide clarity as to when legal advice about cases should be sought to ensure that we are getting legal advice only when we need to. Additionally, through work with legal services, Children's Services will ensure that when legal advice is needed, it is provided by a legal professional at the right level so that the Council is not paying more than needed to for legal advice.</p> <p>The cost of legal advice for the department should reduce whilst ensuring that appropriate advice is sought at the right time and provided by a legal professional at the right level.</p>
2.	Increased income received for Early years training	<p>Early years training provision has previously been reviewed with changes made to the charges for training courses that the Council sells to nurseries, pre-schools and other early years providers. The Council has the power to offer training for all early years providers and is able to impose reasonable charges when securing such services. The Council is required to secure appropriate training provision for specific groups (such as those who are judged less than 'good' by OFSTED) and to ensure that providers are able to access training around the Early Years Foundation Stage, SEND/Vulnerable groups and Safeguarding. The Council should enable providers to choose where and how they take up training or quality improvement.</p> <p>A review would be undertaken of the training courses that we currently sell to nurseries, pre-schools and other early year's providers, alongside a review of the charges.</p> <p>Children's Services early years training offer will be a more traded and commercialised programme. This will mean that those early years settings that choose to access the training offer will be charged more for the provision than they are currently charged, thus increasing the income received and reducing the net cost of the service to the Council.</p>
3.	Reduce the reliance on agency social workers through the improved permanent recruitment and retention	<p>Children's Services currently relies significantly upon agency social workers and managers whilst work is undertaken to improve recruitment and retention of permanent staff. Additional funding has previously been allocated to offset the additional costs of agency workers.</p> <p>Actions to improve rates of recruitment and retention are already being taken, and these actions have been effective. This activity includes recruiting, inducting and supporting</p>

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

	Title of proposal	Description
		<p>newly qualified social workers through the Norfolk Institute of Professional Excellence; in effect “growing our own”. These roles are supernumerary and the programme provides newly qualified social workers with additional support whilst they build up workloads and gain hands-on experience. This programme is key to the department being able to recruit and retain staff, and needs to be funded on a recurrent basis.</p> <p>As the permanent workforce increases there will be less need to use agency workers, which will reduce the additional costs currently being incurred that are over and above the normal establishment costs for social workers. This proposal is expected to make savings in 2018-19, but this initial release of funding will be utilised to provide recurrent funding for the supernumerary Norfolk Institute of Professional Excellence posts, which will ensure sustainable long-term recruitment. The remainder of the saving will be released in 2019-20.</p>
4.	Reduced Looked After Children's costs through implementation of the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme	<p>The numbers of children who are looked after has significantly increased in recent years, along with the cost of providing appropriate care and support. We want to ensure that the right care and support is being offered at the right time to the right people. As part of the Norfolk Futures programme, Policy and Resources committee has agreed significant oneoff investment to develop earlier targeted help where needed and to re-balance the placement mix available to meet the needs of the children and young people who do require care, which should result in a more sustainable system that provides better outcomes for children and families</p> <p>Investment in the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme will be required. This will include improving support to families to prevent children and young people from coming into care, and increasing the numbers of children who are fostered, particularly by foster carers who work directly for Norfolk County Council</p> <p>Over the life of the transformation programme, it is expected that the department will see a reduction in the number of children and young people who are looked after. This will be due to families being better supported to stay together and, where this not possible, there will be an increase in permanence arrangements.</p> <p>Additionally, it is expected that the placement mix for those children who do need to be looked after will change to see a shift towards foster care, particularly in-house foster care,</p>

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

	Title of proposal	Description
		and away from expensive, residential placements. This should lead to a reduced unit cost per child looked after. The reduction in numbers of children who are looked after and the reduction in unit cost will generate savings.
	Remodel the children's centre service offer	<p>The current delivery model provides access to Children's Centre services to all families in Norfolk and is delivered from both dedicated buildings and via a number of outreach locations. There is an opportunity to consider how improved integration and collaboration between both universal and targeted support services to ensure that the appropriate response is provided to the right family at the right time.</p> <p>Remodelling of the Children's Centre service for Norfolk is part of the Local Services Strategy corporate priority work, and will look at how other properties within the public estate can be utilised to support effective delivery of the service whilst making better use of available resources.</p> <p>It is envisaged the result would be services being provided more flexibly through effective joint working, including closer alignment with the library service and Public Health commissioned Healthy Child Programme. Ensuring that appropriate provision is made available to the most vulnerable families and communities will remain the key priority of the Children's Centre Service.</p>

Who is affected?

7. The proposals will affect all children and young people and their families in Norfolk, including those with protected characteristics; it will also affect staff:

People of all ages	YES
Disability (all disabilities and long-term health conditions)	YES
Gender reassignment (e.g. people who identify as transgender)	YES
Marriage/civil partnerships	YES
Pregnancy & Maternity	YES
Race (different ethnic groups, including Gypsies and Travellers)	YES
Religion/belief (different faiths, including people with no religion or belief)	YES
Sex (i.e. men/women/intersex)	YES
Sexual orientation (e.g. lesbian, gay and bisexual people)	YES

8. The proposals will also affect families in rural areas.

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

Potential impact

9. Overall, as in previous years, Children's Services budget proposals for 2018/19 will impact primarily on children and families – which is inevitable, because children and families constitute the majority of service users.
10. However, there is no evidence at this stage to indicate that the four proposals below will have any detrimental impact on children and families, or families in rural areas. The reasons why are explained below.
11. The one exception is the proposal to **remodel the children's centre service offer**. This is dealt with separately on **page 8**.

	Title of proposal	Issues to note/potential impact
1.	Reduction in legal expenses	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because there is no change to service standards, quality or delivery.
2.	Increased income received for Early years training	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no change to service standards, quality or delivery. • The new approach will apply equally to settings in both rural and urban areas. • The reduced level of funding will not inadvertently lead to higher costs for settings in rural areas.
3.	Reduce the reliance on agency social workers through the improved permanent recruitment and retention	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no change to service standards, quality or delivery. • The new approach will apply equally to operational delivery in rural and urban areas.
4.	Reduced Looked After Children's costs through implementation of the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no change to service standards, quality or delivery. • The new approach will apply equally to rural and urban areas. • The new approach will apply equally to operational delivery in rural and urban areas.

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

Title of proposal:	Remodel the children's centre service offer
Reference:	
Lead Officer:	Jo Richardson, Equality & Diversity Manager

Analysis of proposal & potential impact

Overview – about the proposal

1. This proposal seeks to remodel children's centre services in Norfolk. The aim of the proposal is to take account of demographic changes which are impacting on how children's centres are being used by families with children under five, and explore new ways of continuing to provide support and information to families at a reduced cost.
2. There are three elements to the proposal:
 - Review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk
 - Focus children's centre services on the families that need them most
 - More children's centre services and libraries to share buildings.
3. More details about these three elements of the proposal are set out in the consultation document: <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/budget2018/>
4. The proposals would save £5.5 million over the next three years.

More information about the proposal

5. If the proposal goes ahead, parents and children accessing children's centre services will continue to be able to access information, advice, guidance and support, including an increased offer from on-line support. For those in need of face to face support, this would be provided on a targeted outreach basis, as well as support being available via phone and on-line. This would apply to vulnerable families and communities living in both rural and urban areas.
6. The main change is that there may be a scaling back of the 'universal offer' from 2018/19 onwards. The 'universal offer' relates to services for all families/children, as opposed to families in need.
7. Children's centre providers already undertake a needs analysis to identify families in need, to inform the types of services which will be provided to the local community each year. The remodelled children's centre service will be more focussed on these target groups identified through the needs analysis.
8. The provision of targeted support will be determined in collaboration with the Healthy Child Programme and social care teams to ensure that each family in need receives an appropriate and effective response.

The role of Norfolk's children's centres

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

9. Children's centres offer all families with children under five in Norfolk a range of services, information and support in their local community. They also help some children aged 5-8 with the transition to school.
10. Most children's centres offer advice about pregnancy, parenting support, play sessions, information about children's health, training courses for adults, as well as support finding specialist groups and services. However, generally speaking, the support offered is based on the needs of the local community.
11. Some children's centre services are available to all families, such as play and stay sessions, and information, advice and guidance about parenting and other topics such as health services, training and jobs. Children's centres send information to all families registered with them about activities and services on offer locally, and this can include information about activities being run by other organisations, such as local charities and community groups.
12. Children's centres also provide some services which are for specific groups, for example sessions for new parents / carers or activities for children with disabilities. Children's centre staff plan these activities to help the families that they are working with at the time. So these activities are different depending on where people live and they change over time as the needs of families change.
13. Children's centre staff also work directly with families on a one-to-one basis. This might involve meeting with families in the children's centre or home visits. One-to-one sessions tend to be offered to families that need the most support. Sometimes this one-to-one support is used to coordinate the work of different organisations who are all supporting the same family, for example children's centres, social care teams and health visitors.

Number and location of Norfolk's children's centres

14. There are 53 children's centres in Norfolk, provided from a range of different buildings and locations. The size of the buildings and how they are used varies considerably.
15. In some areas all services are based in one children's centre building. Whilst some children's centres are in purpose built venues (there are 37 of these in total), others are on school sites and some are in buildings they share with other organisations. Most children's centres in urban areas have a dedicated building, due to their proximity to numerous families living nearby and regularly attending activities.
16. In other areas of Norfolk, children's centres have a base that they use to run activities, but they also offer services in village halls and community buildings. This approach is used to provide services to families living in some of Norfolk's market towns and their surrounding villages.
17. In some areas there is no children's centre building, instead services are offered in different community buildings, such as village halls and community buildings. This approach is used in urban and rural areas. It works well for rural communities, where families are more spread out in different villages and there isn't one obvious place to have a children's centre building that all families could easily get to.

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

Analysis of the people affected by the proposal

18. The proposal will primarily impact on families with children aged 0-5 in Norfolk. This is because the majority of children in Norfolk (over 93%) aged 0-5 in are currently registered with their local children's centre. This represents over 41,000 children and over 33,000 families across the county.
19. However, although most young people in Norfolk are registered with their local children's centre, usage rates vary significantly. Some families regularly go to their children's centre and use numerous services, and other families don't use children's centre services at all. Typically, three quarters of the children who are registered with their local children's centre use services on at least three different occasions.

Potential impact

20. This proposal will primarily impact on families with children aged 0-5 in Norfolk, because these families are the primary service users.
21. There may be some *detrimental* impact on families with children aged 0-5. This is because the proposal may result in some universal services for families with children 0-5 being stopped, and some parents/carers may have to pay for some activities that are currently offered for free. However, this detrimental impact is likely to be limited, as if the proposal goes ahead, children's centre services will continue to be provided across Norfolk. In addition, children's centre services will continue to be targeted at families who need it most, which will include families with disabled children and families with vulnerabilities. Because of this, there is no evidence that the proposal may have a detrimental impact on children and families who are disabled, Black, Asian or minority ethnic, or who have a religion or belief or other protected characteristic.
22. At this stage, it is not possible to identify which specific services may be stopped or charged for, or which service users may be affected, because this is not yet known. If the proposal goes ahead, work will take place to review the needs of families in each area, and as a result of the review, options will be developed on how and where services should be delivered. It is at this point that proposals could emerge to change or stop services that some service users may currently be receiving.
23. There is no risk to elected members that giving approval for the review to go ahead may lead to detrimental impacts on families with children 0-5 going undetected. This is because the review methodology is clear that at the point that *any* options emerge to change or stop services currently being received by service users, public consultation with those affected will take place, and a detailed equality impact assessment will be undertaken. The findings of this will be reported to Children's Services Committee to ensure any impacts are fully taken into account before a decision is made.
24. Looking ahead, in a worst case scenario, if a children's centre service was changed, stopped, or delivered from a different location, the main detrimental impact this is likely to have is that:
 - The family has to find an alternative, which they may have to pay for, which would have a financial impact. In some cases, an alternative may not be available.

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- Some families may decide not to find an alternative, and therefore may no longer benefit from the support they were previously receiving. However, as mentioned previously, it is important to remember that the review methodology is clear that the services affected will be universal services, not services for families in need.
 - If operations in rural centres are closed and consolidated into market towns, this may transfer the cost for travel etc. onto the user, and also assumes that there is the 'technical' ability to access the site i.e. people have a car or access to a bus route. This may not always be the case for people in rural areas, particularly disabled people. This could have an unintended consequence of preventing people accessing services. To address this, it will be important to fully risk assess access planning of potential sites, and conduct cost impact assessments on users.
 - Childrens Service's capacity to deliver on social mobility priorities may be more limited, which in turn, could put greater pressure on schools or voluntary organisations in the area. In urban areas, this may be less of an issue, but in rural areas, where there is less choice or service provision, it could create a challenge. It is possible that some families in rural areas may have to travel further to receive a service, which would impact on their time and travel costs.
25. It is possible that the proposal may result in fewer dedicated children's centres and more services might be provided in community buildings. Any options to relocate services to different buildings, or to share buildings between libraries and children's centres would need to take into account the accessibility of these buildings for disabled parents/carers and children, and access to public transport and disabled parking. Where there may be greater constraints on space, it will be important to ensure that there is still sufficient space for disabled children, adults and staff to easily access all areas (for instance, when using motorised wheelchairs), and appropriate accessible toilet/changing facilities. It will also be important to ensure that consideration is given to managing noise levels – to address the needs of people who are hearing impaired or deaf.
26. Another issue to take into account is that the proposal mentions that families will be able to access more services 'on-line'. It will be important to take into account that many families in rural areas do not have good broadband access, may not be ICT literate or may require a minimum level of web accessibility in order to access ICT(eg for disabled parents). Also, families on low incomes may lack the necessary hardware and software at home to connect to online services.
27. Looking ahead, the proposal to locate children centres and libraries into one location is likely to have a positive impact on community cohesion, and could present long term opportunities to promote equality. For example, Norfolk libraries are highly regarded by diverse communities, and have a great deal of expertise in promoting accessibility and inclusion. Children's centre staff have expertise in very specialised areas, such as being ambitious for disabled young people to help them develop their full potential. Locating both teams in one building will create opportunities for pooling this wealth of ideas, knowledge and expertise, to benefit all communities.
28. In some cases, support for families may be better coordinated across different agencies – e.g. children's centre staff, health visitors and social care teams.

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29. Accessibility is a priority for Norfolk County Council. Norfolk has a higher than average number of disabled and older residents compared to other areas of the UK, and a growing number of disabled young people.
30. Proposals relating to contract review will take full opportunity to build accessibility considerations into service design.

Human rights implications

31. Public authorities in the UK are required to act compatibly with the Human Rights Act 1998. There are no human rights issues arising from the proposals.

Recommended actions

	Action	Lead	Date
1.	<p>If the proposal to remodel children's centre services goes ahead, at an appropriate stage when the review has taken place, equality/rural impact assessments should be carried out on any options to cease, stop or change a service, to identify any potential impacts on service users.</p> <p>If any adverse impacts are identified, they should be reported to Children's Services Committee, along with any proposed mitigating actions that could be carried out, for consideration before a final decision is made.</p>		From 1 April 2018
2.	Where service remodelling relating to the proposal to remodel children's centre services impacts on staff working patterns, line managers to consult with staff about any proposed changes, prior to them being agreed. This will enable any access issues to be highlighted. Where issues are identified, appropriate solutions should be sought e.g. reasonable adjustments.	Lead HR and OD Business Partner supporting Children's Services to ensure line managers are aware of their responsibilities	From 1 April 2018
3.	HR Shared Service to continue to monitor whether staff with protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in redundancy or redeployment figures, and if so, take appropriate action.	HR shared Service	From 1 April 2018

Evidence used to inform this assessment

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty
- Relevant business intelligence

Summary of Rural and Equalities Impact Assessments

Further information

For further information about this equality impact assessment please contact Jo Richardson, Corporate Planning & Partnerships Manager, Tel: 01603 223816, email: jo.richardson@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Neil Howard on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (Textphone).

Proposal one – review how children’s centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk

1. We are proposing review whether children’s centre services are being provided in the most appropriate way in each area of Norfolk, or whether in some areas we should change the way they are provided.
2. We know that the needs of families across Norfolk vary considerably. We want to look at whether we can improve how children’s centre services are provided, so that families get the right support, at the right time and in the right way.

Why do we want to review children’s centre services now?

3. The review we want to do isn’t just about helping the County Council save money, there are a number of other reasons we want to look at what children’s centre services we offer and how they are provided:
 - Since children’s centres were established over a decade ago the needs of families have changed and the way that many parents / carers want to get support is different. Technology now plays a much bigger part in our lives. Parents / carers increasingly go online, open up an app or ask their peers for information and advice via WhatsApp, rather than go to a children’s centre building. Our services need to adapt to how parents / carers want to get support.
 - We know that some of the families who need the most support prefer to be supported at home, because they don’t feel comfortable or confident enough to go to a children’s centre building. We also know that some families prefer one-to-one sessions with a member of staff, rather than group activities. So we need to look at whether we have the right balance of activities taking place in dedicated children’s centre buildings and one-to-one support for families.
 - Over the last decade Norfolk has also changed. We’ve had new housing developments, some areas have had lots of money invested in them and families have moved around. As a result the demand for children’s centre services has

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changed across Norfolk and we need to assess whether our buildings are in the right places and if they are all still required.

- There is also a shortage of pre-school, nursery and school places in some areas of Norfolk. So if families with young children could be better supported at home, in community buildings or online, then we could look at whether some children's centre buildings could be used to help families with childcare and their children's education.
- Our children's centres developed in quite an organic way, as funding became available and different opportunities arose. It therefore makes sense to look again at the services they are providing, the way they are supporting families and the buildings they are operating from to see whether we need to change anything.
- We have contracts with 12 other organisations to run our children's centres on our behalf, at a cost of approximately £10 million per year. All of the current contracts for running our children's centres end in March 2019, which means we have an opportunity to review what services our children's centres provide and how they operate.

What would our review look at?

4. To review how children's centre services are provided in each area of Norfolk we would have to consider a wide range of factors. We are proposing to look at:
 - The number of people using each children's centre service
 - The number of people going to each children's centre building
 - The needs of the families in different areas of Norfolk, including the level of deprivation
 - Whether there are opportunities for children's centres to share buildings with other services or organisations – see proposal 3 for more information
 - How people get to children's centre services and the transport options available
 - The leasing arrangements for children's centre buildings.
5. Our review would produce recommendations for each area of Norfolk, including whether an area needs a dedicated children's centre building, if the children's centre could share a building with another organisation or if services would be better provided in community buildings. It would also make recommendations about the types of services needed and different ways of supporting families across Norfolk and in each area.
6. It is too early to say how children's centre services could change in different areas of Norfolk or what this would mean for each individual children's centre building. Much more detailed work would need to be done to understand this. We would consult on any significant changes to how buildings are used, where services are delivered from and changes to the services on offer.

Proposal two – focusing children's centre services on the families that need them most

7. Children's centres provide a wide range of services. Some of these services are available to all families, such as play and stay sessions, and others are for families who need more support, for example families who are struggling with unemployment, substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental or physical health problems. The organisations who run our children's centres each carry out a detailed analysis to identify vulnerable families.

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8. The Sure Start Children's Centre Statutory Guidance (2013) makes it clear that the service should be focused on helping families who need extra support:
9. "The core purpose of Children's Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a "particular focus on families in greatest need of support" in order to reduce inequalities in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances".
10. In 2015 we proposed to focus more of the work of our children's centres on supporting the families that need them most. We consulted people on what they thought of our proposal. We received 291 responses about this proposal, of which 198 people (68.0%) agreed with the proposal and 61 people (21.0 %) disagreed. 32 (11.0%), neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal. Here is a summary of what people told us:
11. Of those who expressed support for this proposal, two thirds did not give a reason for their support. Of those explaining their support, the largest number agreed that services should be better targeted. However a significant number that agreed with the proposal also argued that services should remain universal, providing a broad range of services. A smaller number of people stated that services need to change and needed to provide value for money.
12. Of those who expressed opposition to the proposal, the majority stated that Children's Centres provided a universal, preventative service that should be protected and not cut. Some respondents argued that a more targeted approach would miss people that require support, who would then require more expensive services in the long run.
13. The County Council decided to go ahead with this proposal in February 2016. Since then we have worked with the organisations who run our children's centres to make some changes. Children's centre staff now work more closely with social care teams. The families they are both working with now receive more coordinated support. We've also seen that more of the activities which are available to all families are now being run by voluntary and community groups, instead of by children's centre staff. This has meant the staff can focus their time on the work with the families that need the most support. The changes we have made have saved us approximately £2.5 million.
14. Over the past 18 months we had a big push to encourage all families with young children to register with their children's centre. This has been very successful and it means that children's centre staff now come into contact with more families and so have a greater chance of identifying all the families that need extra support. This has also helped children's centres to build better connections with their local communities and we've seen parental satisfaction go up.
15. We are now proposing to look at what we can do to further improve children's centre services for the families that need them most. We want to look at ways of improving the plans we put in place to support families and how we share information between different organisations about the families we're working with.
16. In order to improve support to the vulnerable families and save money, we would need to look again at the services available to all families. This might mean that children's centres need to reduce how much they spend on services available to all families or

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change how they provide them, for example we want to increase the amount of support available for parents / carers online.

17. We would make sure that children's centre staff continue to work with health visitors, social care teams and others so that each family gets appropriate information, guidance and support.

1 Prohibited conduct:

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition, rule, policy or practice in your organisation that applies to everyone disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

2 The protected characteristics are:

Age – e.g. a person belonging to a particular age or a range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

Disability - a person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and civil partnership

Pregnancy and maternity

Race - refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion and belief - has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as Atheism).

Sex - a man or a woman.

Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

3 The Act specifies that having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity might mean:

- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of others;
- Encouraging people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.

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4 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between people and communities involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

2018-19 to 2021-22 Proposed Committee Revenue Budget

Budget change forecasts for 2018-22 Children's Services					
Reference		2018-19 £m	2019-20 £m	2020-21 £m	2021-22 £m
	OPENING BUDGET	177.351	185.948	184.651	185.700
	ADDITIONAL COSTS				
	Inflationary				
	Basic Inflation - Pay (2% for 18-22)	1.390	1.249	1.273	1.273
	Basic Inflation - Prices	2.055	1.796	1.776	1.776
	Demand / Demographic				
	Additional Children's Services pressures	6.000			
	Legislative Requirements				
	Education Services Grant	1.401			
	New funding School Improvement (monitoring and brokering) may come with additional responsibilities	0.635			
	NCC Policy				
	PIMS	0.650			
	COMPASS	0.900			
		13.031	3.045	3.050	3.050
	SAVINGS				
CHL013	Update our budget for retirement costs for teachers to reflect how much we are now spending on this - we are not responsible for paying redundancy and retirements costs for teachers that work for the growing number of academy schools	-0.100			
CHL026	Keep all children's centres open and focus their work on supporting the families that need them most	-0.309			
CHL041	Remodel the children's centre service offer	-2.000	-3.000		
CHL042	Reduction in legal expenses	-0.142	-0.142		
CHL043	Reduce the reliance on agency social workers through the improved permanent recruitment and retention		-0.200		
CHL044	Reduced Looked After Children's costs through implementation of the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme		-1.000	-2.000	-2.000
CHL045	Increased income received for Early Years training	-0.090			
		-2.641	-4.342	-2.000	-2.000
	BASE ADJUSTMENTS				
	New funding for School Improvement (monitoring and brokering)	-0.265			
	Troubled Families Grant less than expected	0.576			
		0.311	0.000	0.000	0.000
	COST NEUTRAL ADJUSTMENTS				
	Educator Solutions transfer to HR	-0.120			
	Schools Appeals Panel from Democratic Services to Children's Services	0.101			
	Depreciation transfer	-3.477			
	Debt management transfer	-0.010			
	REFCUS transfer	1.607			
	Family Nurse Partnership to Public Health	-0.205			
		-2.104	0.000	0.000	0.000
	NET BUDGET	185.948	184.651	185.700	186.750

2018-19 to 2021-22 Capital Budget Proposals

New and extended capital schemes

Proposed new schemes added to the capital programme are listed below:

Service Area	Title	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Additional information
		£m	£m	£m	£m	
Children's Services	Capital projects to be funded from prudential borrowing	2.200				An amount of £2.2m funding has been or is likely to be received from revenue sources currently or previously applied to capital purposes. This proposal is to replace the revenue funding with prudential borrowing, such that the funding can be re-allocated back to revenue, and can therefore be used as a one-off source to support the 2017-18 Children's Services revenue budget.