



**CABINET**

**11 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH: LUCY WIGHTMAN AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN SERVICES: WALTER MCCULLOCH**

**CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEPUTY LEADER & PUBLIC HEALTH: COUNCILLOR CECILE IRVING-SWIFT**

Subject:	Universal Children Centre Services Provision
Recommendations:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cabinet acknowledges the findings from the Under Fives needs assessment.</li> <li>2. Cabinet acknowledges the findings of the Universal children centre and de-designation of children centre consultation</li> <li>3. Cabinet endorses suggested next steps:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Model of delivery to be determined based on Under Fives needs assessment, the current evidence base and universal children centre services consultation findings (organisations / sectors, such as health service providers and JobCentre Plus will continue to have a significant role in children’s’ centre service delivery).</li> <li>b. To review community facilities in areas where there is an evidenced need for a UCC, including libraries, and locations used by 0-19 health services and targeted children centres to best locate the UCC early years staff and services.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

**1. Purpose of Report**

- To inform Cabinet of the findings from the Under Fives needs assessment of universal children’s provision.
- To inform Cabinet of the Universal children centre and de-designation of children centre consultation.
- To ask for Cabinet’s support of the suggested next steps with regards universal children services provision.

**2. How This Decision Contributes to the Council Plan**

The Council’s vision is to make Northamptonshire a great place to live and work, achieved through this proposal by focusing on families with young children, increasing the wellbeing of the county’s communities, safeguarding individuals and meeting the Health and Wellbeing Board priority that every child in Northamptonshire gets the best start in life.

### **3. Background: Current Universal Children Centre Service Provision**

3.1 A Cabinet decision in 2013 moved universal children centre (UCC) services into libraries, designating certain libraries as children centres (Appendix 1), and moved the funding of this universal service to public health grant. UCCs, together with Public Health commissioned 0-5 health services, address priorities for improving outcomes for young children and their families. Reducing inequalities and contributing to improving early years' education, maximising child development/school readiness, improving parenting skills and the life chances of children and their families. As a universal provision UCCs are often the first point of access by families with greater need that requires escalation to specialist services. The service is delivered by trained early years' staff.

3.2 The library service, in addition to this, offers a service to families that includes;

- Programmes of activities including access to support groups and information messaging which tackle social isolation and loneliness, promote healthy lifestyles and enhance mental wellbeing.
- Programme of sessions supporting school readiness.
- Bookstart programme.
- A breastfeeding friendly space.

3.3 In May 2016, Cabinet agreed the current model of targeted children centres and where universal children centres closed, the nearest library was made a designated universal children centre. This co-location of UCC within libraries had other purposes; effective and efficient use of community resources to increase access to services and allowing for greater resource for targeted children's centres to support those children/families with additional needs (e.g. Level 2, Early Help and Level 3, targeted support aligned to the Children & Families Early Help & Prevention Commissioning Strategy).

3.4 In March 2018, Cabinet agreed services and interventions included within the scope of UCC needed review and a new model of delivery developed that would be:

- Focused on local need.
- Evidence-based and high quality.
- Accessible to families with children aged under 5 years old.
- Joined-up with other NCC children's services such as Early Help and services commissioned by NCC Public Health such as universal 0-19 health services and CCG commissioned services such as maternity and primary care.
- Working with families and service users to ensure their views are heard.
- Compliant with Public Health grant conditions, demonstrating value for money.
- Robustly evaluated.

In addition, based on the principles above, current delivery sites will be reviewed and consideration given to alternative venues for delivery where services could be improved to reflect the new model of delivery. Making more effective use of available resources to provide access to support for young children and their families. Aiming to increasing the take up of children's centre services amongst families with young

children in the county, to allow more of the resources available to children's centre service providers to be focussed on those children and families with identified additional needs.

The latest universal children centre service review can be found in Appendix 2. It demonstrated that in 2017-18:

- 55.2% of Under Fives within the county were registered with Children Centre Services (this is a slight reduction on previous years and fluctuates across the County).
- Access figures across the county were at an average of 21.5% again this fluctuates across the County.
- 50% of all Children Centre Services registrations were Universal Registrations, which is almost 18,000 children from April 2017 to the end of February 2018.
- There were 5,275 under five activities held across the library service, with a total attendance of 115,000 people at those events, which is an average of about 20 people per activity.

#### **4. Key findings from Under Fives Needs Assessment**

This need assessment (Executive Summary - Appendix 3) demonstrates that UCC service provision needs to refocus on greater integration with maternity, health and social care services in order to improve health outcomes for young children and families. Areas for refocus for all areas should be:

- Reducing smoking in pregnancy.
- Improving maternal mental health.
- Reducing incidence of domestic abuse.
- Sustaining breastfeeding, healthy eating, and reducing levels of obesity including the promotion of healthy start vitamins.
- Improving school readiness.
- The needs of families with young children varies across communities and geographical areas; prioritisation of different needs at local level by UCC services could be better achieved by the early years professionals working in a more integrated way with Public Health commissioned 0-19 health services.

#### **Principles to Determine Universal Children Centre Services Model**

It was agreed previously by Cabinet that the services and interventions included within the scope of universal children service provision will:

- be based on local need.
- be in line with the evidence base and of a high quality.
- be accessible to all families with children under five.
- ensure local authority children's services are joined up.
- complement partners' work in the system where they are working with the same population group such as Health Visitors and Early Help teams etc.
- take into consideration the views of target populations and use these to review and adapt service provision
- meet Public Health grant conditions and be good value for money.
- be well evaluated, transparent and include service user's views.

## 5. Consultation and Scrutiny

5.1 A 12 week consultation with all customer groups that may be affected by the proposals and other stakeholders was undertaken. This took place via:

- Online questionnaires.
- Printed questionnaires on request.
- Drop-in events at libraries in affected districts.
- An opportunity for stakeholders to write or email their views to the Council.

5.2 A questionnaire was devised to provide a way for the full range of stakeholders and interested parties to give their views on the future delivery of universal children's services in the context of the decision to decommission 21 libraries, 19 of which deliver universal children's services (a decision now not being implemented).

5.3 The questionnaire was designed to:

- Inform the audience of the current service and set out why the current provision needs to change.
- Gain an understanding of current and prospective service users, which libraries providing universal children's services they use, which services they use and what it is they value about the current service.
- Establish an evidence base that sets out the need for universal children's services across the county.
- Gather feedback on where service users would be comfortable in accessing services in the future.
- Establish which other similar services are accessed locally.
- Understand how service users would like to be informed about universal children's services.

5.4 A total of 984 questionnaire responses were received generating feedback that included almost 2,000 comments from the different groups of respondents. Respondents were mostly current or prospective parents/carers or guardians of a child or children under 5, or parents/carers who had used Universal Children's Services when their children were younger. Many respondents referenced the earlier decision to decommission 21 libraries and expressed their disappointment at that decision. The responses in relation to current provision showed that Universal Children's Services are highly valued by current and former service users, as well as professionals who signpost families to them.

5.5 As well as providing an understanding of the use of current Universal Children's Services, the responses provided feedback on the alternative types of venues that respondents would be prepared to access services at in the future instead of libraries and what respondents considered to be important factors when thinking about venues for these services.

5.6 This indicated that there was a strong desire for services to remain local even if they can no longer be delivered in libraries, as easy access was considered extremely important. There was demand for more services and concern that this review might lead to a reduction in services or that existing services would

become oversubscribed as a result of moving services out of the libraries being decommissioned.

5.7 A full summary of the findings, along with a more detailed explanation of the methodology, can be found in Appendix 4, along with analysis and summaries of responses received at drop-in events and from other stakeholders and members of the public. A copy of the questionnaire and redacted responses are included in full in Appendix 5.

## **6. Equality Screening**

6.1 Draft Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for each locality were produced at the start of the consultation and can be accessed via this [link](#). The initial impact upon groups with protected characteristics was assessed as “unsure”, pending the decision on what the future service provision might look like. The EqIAs acknowledged that changes to universal children’s services have the potential to affect women (often the primary care givers of children under 5 years old), children and young people and women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby.

6.2 However, recommissioning based on need should mean those that need the services most should have better access to an evidence based service to help them improve their family’s health and wellbeing and children’s development.

6.3 The needs analysis, alongside the consultation feedback, must be considered to ensure that universal children’s services are provided where required and at the level that the evidence suggests is needed in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts from the decision to move these services out of libraries. The draft EqIAs will be updated as part of this work when the options for future delivery are being developed and will be published on our website.

6.4 As the library decommissioning decision has been quashed following a Judicial Review, it is important to note that the insight gained from the Under 5s Needs Assessment will be taken into consideration for future library service provision. It is also of note that Universal Children’s Services may change as a result of the Needs Assessment findings, to ensure greater access and improved outcomes, and that this decision would be separate to, and independent of, any future library service changes.

## **7. Alternative Options Considered**

The provision of universal children centre services will only change if currently not evidence based or in an area of need where current service provision does not match the needs of the population. This is to ensure the services are improving the health and wellbeing of Under Fives and their families and reducing inequalities.

All existing locations are being considered as alternative venues to deliver services. Options will be explored with libraries that have an expression of interest to be led by the community, if in an area of identified need.

## 8. Financial Implications

8.1 The Public Health grant contribution to universal children centres provision will remain the same for 2018/2019:

	Forecast			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 & beyond
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Capital Investment</b>				
Costs				
Funded by	<i>Please detail how costs will be funded.</i>			
<b>On-going costs (revenue)</b>				
Costs – Staffing Early Years	401	401		
Annual agreed allocated priority topic	200	200		
Total on-going costs (revenue)	601	601	601	601
Funding by	<i>Public Health Grant</i>			

What benefits will the proposal deliver?	Improve the life outcomes for under 5s and their families and reduce the numbers of families whose needs escalate to require expensive specialist services.
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## 9. Next Steps

- Model of delivery to be determined based on under fives needs assessment, the current evidence base and universal children centre services consultation findings (organisations / sectors, such as health service providers and JobCentre Plus will continue to have a significant role in children's' centre service delivery).
- To review community facilities in areas where there is an evidenced need for a UCC, including libraries, and locations used by 0-19 health services and targeted children centres to best locate the UCC early years staff and services.

## 10. Risk and Business Continuity Management

1. Risk(s) associated with the proposal:

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Lack of available alternative location within area of need is identified.	Mapping of all potential venues by borough and district, and review where other wellbeing services are delivered as an opportunity to co-locate.	Green
Potential clawback from designated children centres in libraries.	Explore the use of buildings with an expression of interest by the community to become independent libraries to include universal children centre service provision (where this option is still valid for communities)	Green

	Explore the option of children's services by other NCC directorates and/or partners being delivered in the location.	
Changes to designation of remaining library sites.	If current provision is in an area of need it will remain. Other sites that are due to currently close with an expression of interest in an area of need may remain as a designated site.	Green

## 2. Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
Health and wellbeing of under fives and their parents will not improve.	Amber
Health inequalities will widen due to limited access to services.	Amber
Limited provision of universal children centre services.	Red

## 11. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Designated Children Centre Status
- Appendix 2: Universal Activity Summary
- Appendix 3: Executive Summary: Under 5s needs assessment
- Appendix 4: Consultation Analysis Report on the provision and delivery of Universal Children's Services and de-designation of Children Centres in Northamptonshire
- Appendix 5: Copy of the Questionnaire and Full Results

Author:	Name: Kelly Morris Team: Public Health and Wellbeing
Contact details:	Tel: 07912 891618 Email: <a href="mailto:Kemorris@northamptonshire.gov.uk">Kemorris@northamptonshire.gov.uk</a>
Background Papers:	N/A
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	NO
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	N/A
Will further decisions be required? If so please outline the timetable here	NO
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	NO
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	NO
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)?	YES Name of SFM: Sue West
Have any capital spend implications been cleared by the Capital Investment Board (CIB)?	NO

Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	YES Name of Director: Lucy Wightman
Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES Cabinet Member: Cllr Irving-Swift
Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	NO Scrutiny Committee:
Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	Yes Name of solicitor: Susan Zeiss
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	YES Name of officer: Simon Deacon
Have any property Issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	YES Name of officer:
Procurement/ Contractual Implications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you evidenced compliance with the Council's Contract Procedures Rules?</li> <li>• Have you identified where you are seeking Cabinet to approve an exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules and detailed the risks and mitigations?</li> <li>• Have you identified any EU or UK legislative risks associated with the exemption process such as non-compliance with the Public Contract Regulations Act 2015, transparency and open competition?</li> <li>• Have you identified the procurement or contractual risks associated with a contract?</li> <li>• Has the contract/procurement been subjected to the Council's Commercial Board?</li> </ul>	N/A
Are there any community safety implications?	NO
<i>Are there any environmental implications:</i>	<i>NO</i>
Are there any Health and Safety Implications:	NO. Any venue used will be assessed to ensure it is fit for purpose
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	NO
Are there any human rights implications:	NO
Constituency Interest:	