

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

30 July 2013

**Report of the Strategic Director for
Children & Younger Adults**

**Proposed Consultation on the Re-Commissioning of a Family
Support Service – (Children and Young People)**

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to undertake formal consultation on options for the provision of low to medium need family support services.

2. Information and Analysis

Local Authorities across the country are facing significant financial challenges which for Derbyshire represents a cut to its budget of £127m over the next 5 years and for children's services this means a cut of £7.8m in the current financial year.

In order to meet these targets Cabinet will be invited to review all contracts and review every service when the opportunity arises to see whether that service is now affordable. Cabinet will be guided in its decision making by the priorities contained within the new Council Plan as it is developed.

On April 1st 2008 Derbyshire County Council commissioned HomeStart to provide a family support service for families with young children. On March 31st 2014 these contracts will have operated for the maximum five year term plus a one year extension. Therefore Cabinet is now invited to review the service to assess whether it is still affordable or whether the service can be provided in a different way in order to achieve the required level of savings.

Five individual Home-Starts have been providing a family support service for families with young children under contract to the Council since April 2008. Cabinet approved the extension of the contracts to 31st March 2014 on the basis that any future service would be subject to a full procurement process. This extension allowed for completion of a review of multi-agency teams to inform the need for additional family support services, and to provide the Council with the opportunity to consider, contribute to, and agree a Derbyshire Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy which itself would influence future procurement intentions.

Current Position

The current contracts cover Erewash, Amber Valley, South Derbyshire and High Peak only. The Bolsover and North East Derbyshire Home-Start closed in April 2012. The Dales and Chesterfield did not develop a Home-Start. Therefore some of Derbyshire's most deprived communities are not provided for under current arrangements.

All Home-Starts operate under the national constitution hosted by the umbrella organisation of "Home-Start UK". The core Home-Start service does not directly address children's needs, but supports the carers of young children through a weekly volunteer home visit. It also refers and signposts families to external additional services, and directly provides some group work and crèche. Out of a total Derbyshire population of 41,000 children aged under five, the Derbyshire Home-Start programmes provide a service for 203 families at any one time.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Research shows that effective contributions to babies and young children's early growth and development have the maximum impact on a child's future life chances. This nationally disseminated research knowledge underpins the "Best Start in Life" section of the Derbyshire Children Trust "Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy".

Additional Provision

Since current Home-Start contracts commenced in 2008 the following additional provision from the ante natal period to age five has been introduced in Derbyshire:

1. County coverage by a network of children centres delivering a range of services and family support provision within the Multi Agency Team locality structure.

2. Midwifery and health visiting services contracted to identify vulnerability at the earliest point and offer additional support.
3. The Family Nurse Partnership supports teenage parents in the most deprived and densely populated areas.
4. Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) is delivered by nearly all children centres most of the time to support children's intellectual development.
5. Investment in the Every Child a Talker(ECaT) in all early years settings servicing a high percentage of children from deprived communities.
6. The Healthy Eating and Nutrition in the Really Young programme (HENRY)) has been commissioned by Public Health to be delivered through Derbyshire's children centres network.
7. The Incredible Years baby and two to eight years parenting programme is delivered as a rolling programme in all localities, and the Living with Children programme supports families experiencing lower level parenting issues.
8. The expansion of the Every Child a Mover programme into an increasing number of settings in order to improve children's core body strength.

In addition, nationally the age of nursery education entry has been progressively reducing and now stands at age three. The Government has invested in "free" two year old child care provision for families eligible for free school meals to "narrow the gap" at school entry between children from more and less affluent households. Additional two year old places have been made available in Derbyshire for specified vulnerable groups irrespective of household income. By September 2014 it is anticipated 2,300 of Derbyshire's two year olds will be eligible for the funding, equating to 40% of all Derbyshire two year olds.

Consultation Proposal

Given the local and national developments over the last five years officers consider that it is an appropriate time to review the current service provision and for consultation to be undertaken.

It is recommended that a consultation takes place over a 12 week period to allow sufficient time for a broad range, and a sufficient number, of local residents to participate in the consultation.

A paper and on-line questionnaire will be developed to capture key information from families with children under 5 from across Derbyshire. The questionnaire will seek to identify use and satisfaction with current services offered to families with under 5's as well as identifying any gaps in current service provision. It is anticipated that by using a variety of channels e.g. posting to families receiving services, making available in libraries, GP surgeries and directly to families through Health Visitors distributing in person, and alongside promotion through social media channels, the Council will ensure maximum reach of the survey. Alternative methods will also be used to ensure that we obtain the views of as wide a range of families as possible.

Early tracking of responses will allow the Council to identify any particular geographical locations or groups where further targeted promotion of the survey is required. It is hoped that at least 300 responses will help shape the future service provision.

Alongside the questionnaire it is anticipated that a small number of focus groups will be undertaken. These will aim to gain a more detailed understanding of matters such as the participants views on the services currently offered, whether families' needs are met, and what further services could be provided. Focus group sample selection will be based on self-referral through a question included on the questionnaire and by asking front line workers such as Children's Centre staff and Health Visitors to promote the opportunity to service users and pass on the contact details of interested parents and carers. Approximately 30 people, 3 groups of 10, will be randomly invited to take part in the focus groups from those expressing willingness to participate. .

Further work to ensure an appropriate mix of service user and non-service user contribution to the consultation process will be undertaken.

It is proposed that the consultation is concluded during October 2013, and that the consultation findings and officer recommendations reported to Cabinet in December 2013.

The proposed timescale is sufficient for a Cabinet decision to issue the minimum three months' notice period required to cease the current Home-Start contracts on 31st March 2014. If a decision is made by Cabinet to procure a new service it will be necessary to

extend the current contracts to allow sufficient time for the procurement process to be completed.

3. Financial Considerations

The combined Derbyshire Home-Start contracts annual cost is £212,000 funded from the CAYA core budget.

4. Legal and Human Rights Considerations

The Council has a duty to conduct appropriate consultation with people and agencies who may be affected by changes in policy and procedure. The consultation process should be tailored to consider the needs of the persons being consulted to enable them to participate fully in this process. Due regard should be had to the information obtained as a result of the consultation in formulating proposals for consideration.

As set out in the report, in the event that a decision is made to procure alternative service provision, Standing Orders in Relation to Contracts would need to be waived given that, in such circumstances, it would not be possible to complete a full procurement process and have any replacement provider in place in time for the expiry of the current contracts with Home-Start on 31st March 2014.

The Local Government Act 1972 states that a local authority may exempt a contract from its standing orders when the authority is satisfied that the exemption is justified by special circumstances. The Council's Standing Orders permit Cabinet or Cabinet Member to waive the requirement to seek competitive tenders for proposed services where it is satisfied that there are such special circumstances.

Accordingly, the Director of Legal Services has advised that it would be justifiable to waive Standing Orders in Relation to Contracts to enter into short extensions to the current contracts with Home-Start for a maximum six month period in order to provide sufficient time for a full procurement and handover process to be completed.

5. Equality Consideration

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in order that the Council may have regard to its human rights obligations when making a final decision in the light of the consultation process.

6. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime & disorder, HR, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

7. Background Papers

- Cabinet Report – Extension of Existing Home Start Contracts – Young People - dated 4th September 2012.
- Children Trust Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy – adopted 12th July 2012.

8. Key Decision

Yes.

9. Is it required that Call-In be waived?

No.

10. Strategic Director's Recommendations

That Cabinet approval be given to:

- 10.1 carry out public consultation on future low to medium family support service need in Derbyshire; and
- 10.2 extend the current contracts with Home-Start referred to in this report for a maximum of six months if required.

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children & Younger Adults