

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2015
CABINET - WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2015
OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES CONSULTATION
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND COMMUNITIES

(Contact: Diana Shelton, Tel: (01993) 861551)

(The overview & scrutiny committee decisions on this matter will be a recommendation to Cabinet)

1. PURPOSE

To seek agreement on the Council's response to consultation on changes to Children's Services proposed by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the response set out in section 6 of this report.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. OCC are currently consulting on a proposed new model of Children's Services in Oxfordshire for children aged 0-19 to save £8 million from the budget by 2016-17.
- 3.2. The consultation has started and closes at midnight on 10th January 2016.
- 3.3. OCC state:

'Our proposal is to create a brand new service for families and their children aged 0-19 years old, or up to 25 if the child has additional needs. We would open up to eight new Children and Family Centres across Oxfordshire. These Centres would support children and their families who need help and will integrate the work of the Children's Centres, the Early Intervention Hubs and Children's Social Care.

As well as the new Children and Family Centres we would also provide an outreach service so we can support children and families close to where they live. We would also work with schools, health and other services to ensure that children and families get the help that they need.'

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. OCC's priorities are to support a thriving Oxfordshire by providing essential public services and helping people and communities take more responsibility for their own lives. This includes:
 - A strong and growing economy
 - Keeping children safe
 - A safety net for adults who can't look after themselves
 - Helping communities thrive

- 4.2. The overwhelming priority for OCC's Children's Services is to meet legal requirement to keep children safe from abuse and neglect.
- 4.3. Reflecting the national trend, OCC's Children's Services are now dealing with a growing number of child protection cases and children at risk of neglect. Between 2011-2014, there has been a 50 per cent rise in the number of children on child protection plans in Oxfordshire, in part as a response to growing concerns about child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- 4.4. OCC contend that this rising demand, coupled with reduced funding, requires radical changes to the way services for children and families are delivered, whilst continuing to fulfil their legal duty to keep children safe. In line with this, child protection specialists feel that it would be unsafe to reduce funding of core child protection social work at this time.
- 4.5. Therefore, OCC's saving with regards to Children's Services need to come from the Early Intervention Service, which includes the current network of 44 Children's Centres, of which 6 are in West Oxfordshire, and 7 Early Intervention Hubs of which one is in West Oxfordshire. Further savings also need to be found from the Youth Engagement and Opportunities Team, and the Thriving Families Team which provides intensive support to families.
- 4.6. The budget agreed by OCC in February 2014 included savings of £3 million in Early Intervention to be achieved by 2017-18. Further savings of £3 million were agreed by OCC in February 2015. In addition to these agreed savings of £6 million to be achieved by 2017-18, the OCC anticipates there will be a need to find additional savings from all service areas.
- 4.7. As a consequence an additional £2 million saving from the Early Intervention budget is anticipated, therefore proposals for savings totalling £8 million are being consulted on. These savings equate to a 50 % reduction in the 2014/15 budget for Early Intervention which was £16 million.
- 4.8. Funding for 2015/16 is currently as set out below:

Service Area	2015-16 Net Budget *
Early Intervention Hubs	£5.8m
Children's Centres	£7.7m
Youth Engagement	£1.5m
Thriving Families	£0.2m
Less: Vacancy factor/savings	-£0.2m
Total Early Intervention	£15.0m

*The 2015-16 net budget has already been reduced by £1m

5. OCC PROPOSAL

- 5.1. OCC has developed a proposed new model for delivering integrated children's services for 0-19 year olds (up to 25 years with additional needs). This is based on integrating the services provided by Children's Social Care, the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs. This approach was recommended by councillors on the cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group set up in May 2014 to look at new ways of working.

- 5.2. The key features of the proposed new model are:
- Creation of up to 8 Children and Family Centres located in the neediest areas of Oxfordshire;
 - Reconfiguring the work of the current 44 Children's Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs so as to target services to children in need, children on child protection plans and those identified as vulnerable through the Thriving Families programme;
 - Development of a network of outreach locations making use of the current configuration of existing Children's Centres and Early intervention Hubs;
 - Development of a new locality support service to offer advice and support to schools and other community services;
 - Development of a new Family Support Service supporting 0-19 year olds (25 years if young people have additional needs). This brings together some of the functions of the current Early Intervention Service with those of the Family Support Teams currently within Children's Social Care;
 - Work with local communities to support the retention of universal provision if communities support this;
 - Ending, or significantly reducing the local authority's role in delivering universal services.
- 5.3. The proposed new model will be funded by combining the budget for the Early Intervention Service, once the £8 million savings have been removed, with the £4 million budget of the Children's Social Care Family Support Teams. This gives a total available budget of £12 million for the proposed new model.
- 5.4. OCC are seeking views on three models for the new service as follows:
- Option 1:**
OCC no longer provides any universal services- this is OCC's preferred option
- Option 2:**
OCC provide limited universal services.
- Option 3:**
Universal services are supported through community investment from OCC.
- 5.5. The option to make no changes to the current Early Intervention Service has not been included as OCC state this is unaffordable, given the budget decisions.
- 5.6. A more detailed breakdown of OCC's proposals is set out in the OCC public consultation document attached as an Appendix to this report. Members should note that a detailed breakdown of the three options in 5.4 is set out in Part 4 of this document.
- 5.7. A summary of the options is set out below, it should be noted that a Children and Family Centre is Witney is proposed in all three options:

Comparison of the proposed options for how the new service could be delivered

	Option 1:	Option 2:	Option 3:
Services targeted to those children and families most in need?	Yes	Yes	Yes
How many Children and Family Centres?	8	8	6
How many Early Intervention Hubs?	0	0	0
Some universal services available?	No	Yes, limited – provided/commissioned directly by the county council	Yes - via grants to voluntary and community sector
Advice and support provided to schools and community services?	Yes	Yes	Yes
New integrated Family Support Service?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Will there be outreach support to children and families?	Yes	Limited	Limited
Will there be group programmes for children and families?	Yes	Limited	Limited
Will there be grant funding to voluntary and community sector?	No	No	Yes

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1. It is acknowledged that OCC, in line with many County and Unitary authorities is facing a difficult combination of massively increased costs associated with child protection and CSE, together with the need to find costs savings.
- 6.2. OCC has been clear that it wishes to target its resources on those families and young people in the most need to enable them to have the best chance of achieving a happy and productive life.
- 6.3. It is recommended therefore that this Council supports the broad principles of OCC's proposal.
- 6.4. However, given the rural nature of our district and taking into account the importance of supporting the voluntary and community sectors in order to build sustainable services, it is recommended that this Council supports **Option 3** as set out above, namely:
Option 3
In this option the local authority would provide grant funding to the voluntary and community sector of up to a total of £1,000,000 each year for the delivery of services to families across Oxfordshire in locations across the County.
The resource to do this would be provided by reducing staffing levels within the Family Support Service and consequently the number of Children and Family Centres.
The children and families supported in this option are children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme.
- 6.5. While it is acknowledged that this option may be seen to disadvantage rural communities by reducing the amount of outreach provided by the Children and Family Centres, it offers the opportunity to support and develop voluntary sector provision, which is well placed to offer local support that is responsive to local needs.
- 6.6. This option also builds in some local resilience against further cuts in the future to OCC's direct provision of services.
- 6.7. It is recommended that in supporting Option 3, we should stress that this support is contingent on a proportional allocation of the £1,000,000 funding to the voluntary and community sector in West Oxfordshire in consultation with this Council.

7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

Cabinet could decide not to support this recommendation.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for this Council arising directly from this report.

9. RISKS

The key risk in this recommendation is that reduced OCC provision of children's services means that children and families cannot access the services they need. This is mitigated, to some degree, by the proposed support for the community and voluntary sector as set out in the option recommended.

10. REASONS

This proposal meets the following council priorities to work in partnership to sustain vibrant, healthy and economically prosperous towns and villages with full employment and be recognised as a leading council that provides efficient, value for money services.

Diana Shelton, Head of Leisure and Communities

(Author: Diana Shelton, Tel: (01993) 861551; Email: diana.shelton@westoxon.gov.uk)

Date: 2nd November 2015

Background Papers:

None

Public Consultation

The proposed new model for children's services in Oxfordshire

14th October 2015 to 10th January 2016

Message from Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council

As you know, the county council is having to make some very difficult financial decisions. Government is reducing our funding as part of its drive to reduce the national budget deficit. At the same time, the demand for council services for children and vulnerable adults is going up.

When it comes to children's services, we must target our resources at children at risk of neglect and abuse. The safety of children is always our first priority. That is what the planned changes to children's services are really about.

Unfortunately, the plan includes withdrawing funding for children's centres and hubs so we can create new Children and Family Centres to target resources at families who need help most. I am truly sorry that we have to consider this option - I know how much people value these services.

The bottom line is we can no longer afford to fund these services in the same way, and unless we can find a new way of working they will close. However I am very confident that we will be able to work with local communities to find ways to continue some of the services offered in children's centres.

Why am I so confident? It has happened before. When the county council withdrew funding for youth services several years ago, communities and voluntary groups stepped in to ensure services continued. Many community libraries are also kept open by volunteers.

Since the county council announced that we would have to withdraw funding, several groups have contacted us to discuss ways to keep services going. I am determined that the council will help to make that happen, so as many services as possible can continue.

So thank you for taking part in the public consultation on our plans to change the way children's services are provided. We really want to hear your views and suggestions, and will listen very carefully.

If you have any ideas about how services in children's centre could continue in your area without county council funding, we would be very keen to hear from you.



Councillor Ian Hudspeth

Summary

Oxfordshire County Council would like your views on its proposal to adopt a new model of children's services in Oxfordshire for children aged 0-19 to save £8 million from the budget by 2016-17.

Our proposal is to create a brand new service for families and their children aged 0-19 years old, or up to 25 if the child has additional needs.

We would open up to eight new Children and Family Centres across Oxfordshire. These Centres would support children and their families who need help and will integrate the work of the Children's Centres, the Early Intervention Hubs and Children's Social Care.

As well as the new Children and Family Centres we would also provide an outreach service so we can support children and families close to where they live. We would also work with schools, health and other services to ensure that children and families get the help that they need.

As part of the consultation process we would like to identify any potential impact of this proposal on individuals, groups and communities. We would also like to identify options for the future use of the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hub buildings. We also want to look at how universal services could continue to be run without financial support from Oxfordshire County Council.

Please take the time to read through this consultation and register your views. The consultation is available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation and in hard copy at all children's centres and early intervention hubs.

We will also be holding three open meetings to discuss the proposals, which any member of the public is welcome to attend.

Details of the meetings are as follows:

Wednesday 18 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at Kings Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Monday 23 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at Didcot Civic Centre, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN

Monday 30 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at John Paul II Centre, Webb Court, Causeway, Bicester OX26 6AW

Please be aware that there are limitations on the capacity within each venue which we will need to abide by.

The consultation runs until 23:59 on 10 January 2016.

Part 1: Background

We support a thriving Oxfordshire by providing essential public services and helping people and communities take more responsibility for their own lives. That includes:

- A strong and growing economy
- Keeping children safe
- A safety net for adults who can't look after themselves
- Helping communities thrive

The overwhelming priority for Oxfordshire County Council's children's services is to meet our legal requirement to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Nationally, children's services are now dealing with a growing number of child protection cases and children at risk of neglect. Between 2011-2014, there has been a 50 per cent rise in the number of children on child protection plans in Oxfordshire, in part as a response to growing concerns about child sexual exploitation.

However, in common with councils across England, Oxfordshire County Council has to make savings across all service areas as a result of reductions in government funding, pressures on all services and restrictions on ability to raise Council Tax.

The budget agreed by Council in February 2014 included savings of £3 million in Early Intervention to be achieved by 2017-18. Further savings of £3 million were agreed by Council in February 2015. In addition to these agreed savings of £6 million to be achieved by 2017-18, the council anticipate there will be a need to find additional savings from all service areas. As a consequence an additional £2 million savings from the Early Intervention budget are anticipated, therefore proposals for savings totalling £8 million are being consulted on. These savings equate to a 50 percent reduction in the 2014/15 budget for Early Intervention which was £16 million.

Reduced funding and rising demand mean we need to make radical changes to the way services for children and families are delivered, whilst continuing to fulfil our legal duty to keep children safe. Child protection specialists feel that it would be unsafe to reduce funding of core child protection social work and therefore the Directorate's savings have to come from the Early Intervention Service, which includes the current network of 44 Children's Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs and the Youth Engagement and Opportunities Team.

Part 2: Oxfordshire's current services

Currently, services for children in Oxfordshire are provided by Children's Social Care and the Early Intervention Service.

Children's Social Care provides a service to children and families whose needs are such that we are required by law to protect and safeguard the well-being of children. The service supports children in need, children subject to child protection plans, looked after children and care leavers (as defined by the Children Act 1989).

The primary aim of Oxfordshire's Early Intervention Service is to provide community support to vulnerable children and families in order to promote their wellbeing and prevent any concerns or difficulties escalating to a point where statutory services are required.

The Early Intervention Service currently comprises of 44 Children's Centres; 7 Early Intervention Hubs; the Youth Engagement and Opportunities team focusing on education, employment and training opportunities for all 16-19 year olds, and 19-25 year olds who are vulnerable; and the Thriving Families Team, providing intensive support to families that have been identified as being in need through the national Troubled Families Programme.

How much is currently spent on the Early Intervention Service?

In 2014-15 the total budget for the Early Intervention Service was £16 million. During this year £1million of savings were made within the service.

The total budget for Early Intervention in 2015-16 is £15 million, and is divided between the different parts of the Service as follows:

Service Area	2015-16 Net Budget * £m
Early Intervention Hubs	5.8
Children's Centres	7.7
Youth, Engagement & Opportunities	1.5
Thriving Families	0.2
Less: Pay budget / Vacancy factor saving share	-0.2
Sub-total – Early Intervention *	15.0
* The 2015-16 net budget has already been reduced by £1m of the £6m planned savings	

What is a Children's Centre?

A Children's Centre is a place, or a group of places, where parents with children under five years old can access early childhood services. These services may be provided at the centre, or advice and assistance may be given in order that children and families can access services at a different location.

Oxfordshire currently has 44 Children's Centres. This includes the Rural Centre Project which provides children's centre services to children and families living in rural areas of the county and is delivered through a mobile bus service.

14 of these Children's Centres are currently managed by schools, 15 by the voluntary sector, and 15 by the Local Authority. All of these Children's Centres, except the Rural Centre Project, are designated centres whose core purpose is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
- child and family health and life chances.

The Children's Centres are located across Oxfordshire:

The Ace Centre, Chipping Norton
Ambrosden Area Children's Centre
Berinsfield Children's Centre
Bicester Children's Centre Brookside
Bicester Children's Centre Glory Farm
Britannia Road Children's Centre, Banbury
Butterfly Meadows (Bloxham & Surrounding Area) Children's Centre
Carterton Children's Centre
Chalgrove and Watlington Children's Centre
Didcot Ladygrove Children's Centre
East Oxford Children's Centre
East Street Children's Centre, Banbury
Elms Road Children's Centre, Botley
Faringdon Children's Centre
Florence Park Children's Centre
Grandpont Nursery Children's Centre
Grove and Hanneys Children's Centre
Heyford & Caversfield Area Children's Centre
Kaleidoscope Children's Centre, Kidlington
Leys Children's Centre
The Maple Tree Children's Centre, Wheatley
Marston/Northway Children's Centre
North Abingdon Children's Centre
North and West Witney Children's Centre
North Banbury Children's Centre
North East Abingdon Children's Centre
North Oxford Children's Centre
The Orchard Children's Centre (Eynsham and Woodstock area)
The Rainbow Children's Centre, Henley
The Rainbow Children's Centre (Sonning Common, Goring and Woodcote area)
Red Kite Children's Centre, Thame
Rose Hill and Littlemore Children's Centre
The Roundabout Children's Centre, Oxford
Slade and Headington Children's Centre
South Abingdon Children's Centre
South Didcot Children's Centre
Southmoor Children's Centre
Stephen Freeman Children's Centre, Didcot
The Sunshine Centre, Banbury
Wallingford Children's Centre

Wantage Children's Centre
Willow Tree Children's Centre (Bampton and Burford Area)
Witney Children's Centre

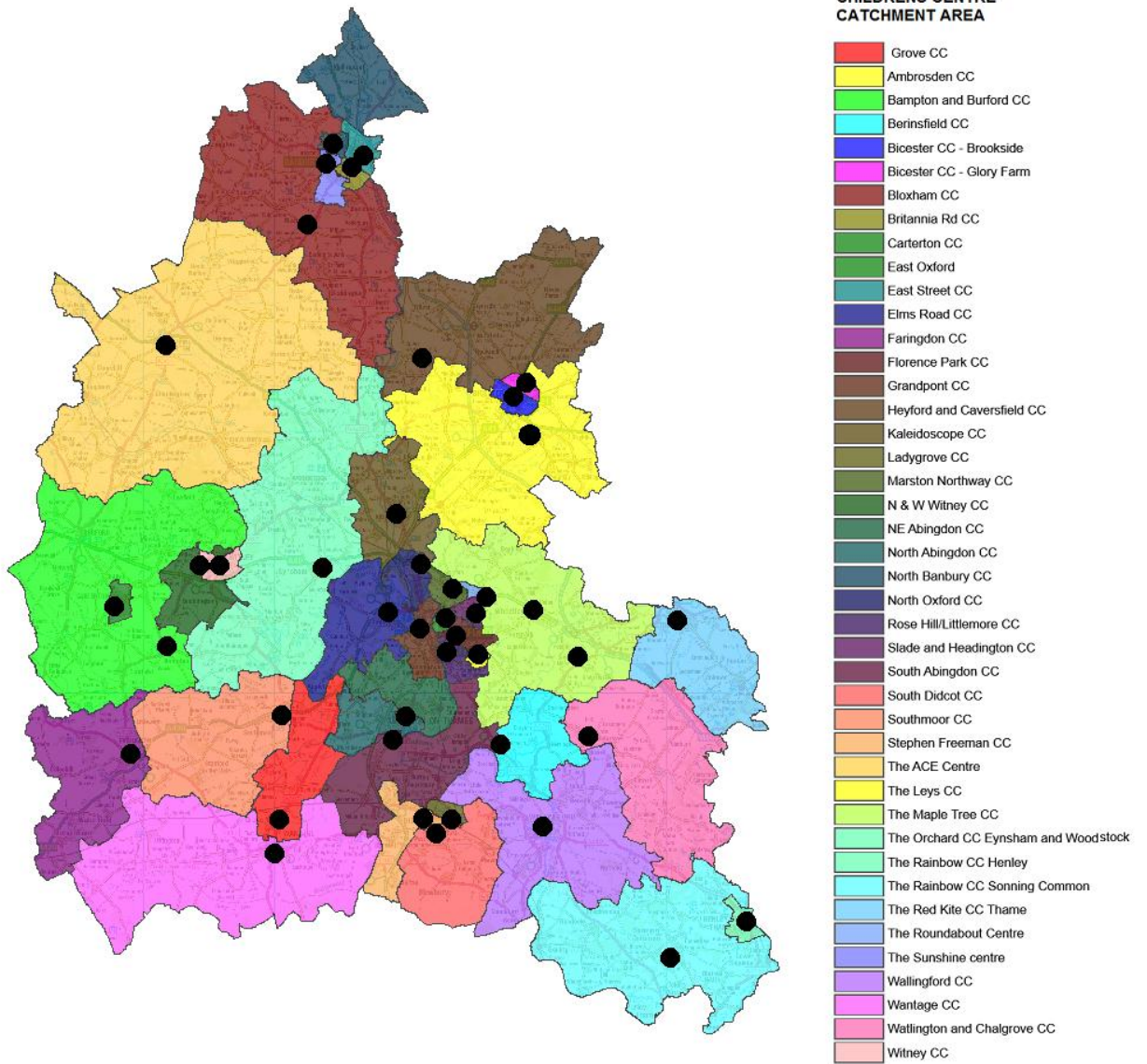
The map below identifies the location of each Centre and the area it serves.

Further information about each Centre is available along with the consultation documents. Alternatively a paper copy of the information will be available at the corresponding Children's Centre.

As the Rural Centre Project is a mobile service which moves across the catchment areas of the other designated Children's Centres, information about the work of this Project has been incorporated into that of the other Centres.

The Government Guidance relating to Children's Centres, *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance for local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus. April 2013* can be found by viewing the following web page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sure-start-childrens-centres>



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What is an Early Intervention Hub?

There are currently seven Early Intervention Hubs in Oxfordshire, along with three satellite hubs. The Hubs provide support to children up to the age of 19, or 25 where the child has additional needs. Support is provided through individual case work, a range of targeted group programmes and open access services, for example youth sessions.


Unlike Children's Centres, Early Intervention Hubs have no legal status, and the council is not under any legal obligation to de-register them or notify a change of use.

The Early Intervention Hubs are located across Oxfordshire:

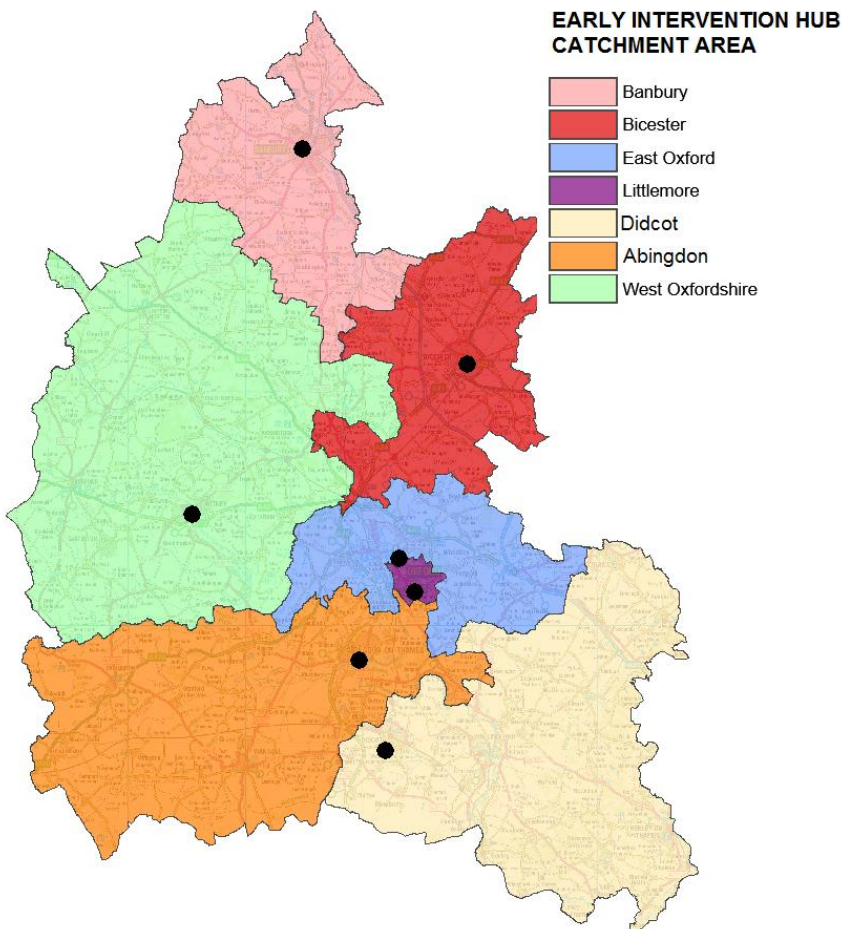
- Abingdon Early Intervention Hub
- Banbury Early Intervention Hub
- Bicester Early Intervention Hub
- Didcot Early Intervention Hub
- East Oxford Early Intervention Hub
- Littlemore Early Intervention Hub
- West Oxfordshire Early Intervention Hub (in Witney)

The map below identifies the location of each Hub and the area it serves.

Further information about each Hub is available along with the consultation documents. Alternatively a paper copy of the information will be available at the corresponding Hub.

 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**
Research and Intelligence Unit
observatory@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Early Intervention Hub Catchment Areas
With Location of Existing Hub Identified

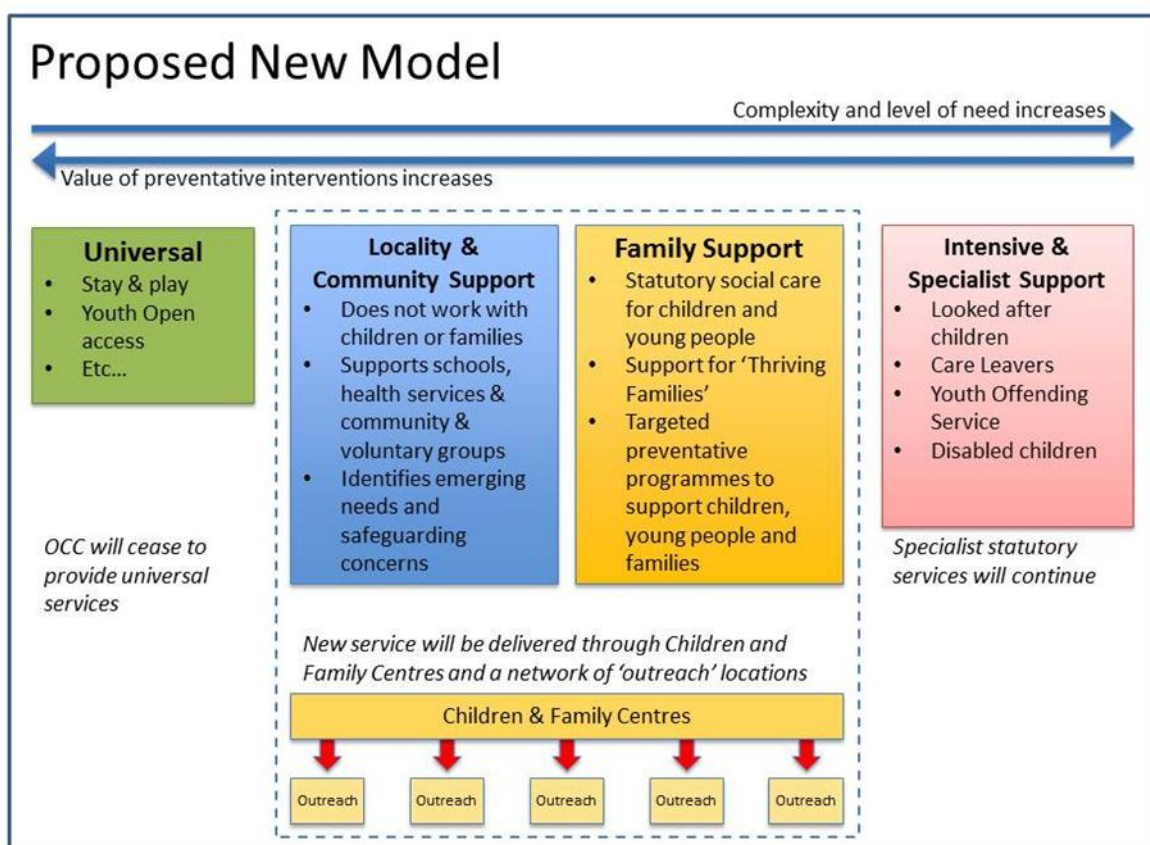


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Part 3: The proposed new model for children's services

The council have developed a proposed new model for delivering integrated children's services for 0-19 year olds (up to 25 years with additional needs). This is based on integrating the services provided by Children's Social Care, the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs and is set out in the diagram below. This approach was recommended by councillors on the cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group set up in May 2014 to look at new ways of working and is underpinned by the principles that guided their work:

- To ensure county council's services are targeted to those in greatest need in both rural and urban locations (ie ensure geographic spread)
- To ensure the child, and their families, are listened to and their experiences of services is seamless and integrated
- To do what the council is required to do by legislation, regulation or policy
- To support partners to provide universal services
- To protect the reputation of the council



The key features of the proposed new model are:

- Creation of up to 8 Children and Family Centres located in the neediest areas of Oxfordshire
- Reconfiguring the work of the current 44 Children's Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs so as to target services to children in need, children on child protection plans and those identified as vulnerable through the Thriving Families programme
- Development of a network of outreach locations making use of the current configuration of existing Children's Centres and Early intervention Hubs

- Development of a new locality support service to offer advice and support to schools and other community services
- Development of a new Family Support Service supporting 0-19 year olds (25 years if young people have additional needs). This brings together some of the functions of the current Early Intervention Service with those of the Family Support Teams currently within Children's Social Care
- Work with local communities to support the retention of universal provision if communities support this
- Ending, or significantly reducing the local authority's role in delivering universal services.

What is the budget for the proposed new model?

The proposed new model will be funded by combining the budget for the Early Intervention Service, once the £8 million savings have been removed, with the £4 million budget of the Children's Social Care Family Support Teams. This gives a total available budget of £12 million for the proposed new model.

The proposed model is based on the available budget of £12 million and the assumptions in the table below.

Budget Assumptions	£m
Continued delivery of Youth, Engagement Service	1.0
Estimated Premises costs & other supplies and services	1.5
Amount available for staffing	9.5
Total Available Budget for Combined Service	12.0

The available staffing budget determines the number of staff and teams that are affordable in the new structure and the number of Children and Family Centres.

In developing the staff structure for the new service model, the priority was to minimise the proportion of budget spent on buildings whilst maximising their usage. This was achieved by ensuring that sufficient staff are available to provide services from each Children and Family Centre throughout the day and into the early evening, and by significantly expanding outreach services to children and families at other venues.

Budget for staffing was prioritised over funding the running of buildings, in order to maximise the ability of the staff to support vulnerable children and their families across Oxfordshire by travelling to where vulnerable children and families are.

What are universal services?

Universal services are those that provide support to all children. They are not targeted at any specific groups of children, but are open to all. For example, education is a universal service, as are GPs. The local authority currently provides and funds some universal services, including stay and play sessions at Children's Centres and open access youth sessions at Early Intervention Hubs.

What is the Locality and Community Support Service?

This new service will build on the work previously carried out by locality co-ordinators and the current well respected model of locality support whereby social workers link

with universal services enabling the sharing of advice, guidance and concerns. It will support agencies that continue to provide universal services to children, for example schools, health and community based services.

The intention is that within each locality a network will develop of key professionals from schools, health and other services who will work closely with the new service to support vulnerable families within the community. Through this network, children where there are emerging concerns will be identified and support co-ordinated with the aim of preventing their needs escalating to the point where they require a service from the Family Support Service. In this way the outcomes for vulnerable children will continue to be monitored and support put in place where necessary.

What is the Family Support Service?

The Family Support Service will be a new Service which integrates the children social care family support teams with the family support function currently undertaken in the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs.

The new service will support children and families where concerns cannot be managed by universal services. It will support children who are in need (as defined by the Children Act 1989), on child protection plans and going through court processes. In addition, the service will support children and families identified as vulnerable in line with the Thriving Families criteria but who do not meet the threshold for support from social care services. In this way those most vulnerable children and their families, who currently receive support from the Early Intervention Service, will continue to be supported and their outcomes improved.

The Family Support Service will operate from the Children and Family Centres, and work directly with individual children and their families. In addition, a standardised range of group programmes will be delivered designed to address the key risks and issues affecting families. Only programmes where there is strong evidence of their successful impact will be delivered. The focus of these programmes will be on addressing some of the key risks that are affecting children and families in Oxfordshire.

The Family Support Service will develop strong links with the services in the local vicinity, in particular schools, health, and voluntary and community services. In addition, there are opportunities to further develop this service to broaden the range of professionals working within the teams and discussions are on-going with partners regarding this.

What outreach will be provided to children and families?

Children's Centre's and Hubs already offer an extensive outreach service. It is proposed that we build on this and offer an outreach service that will be provided to all parts of Oxfordshire which will help those children and families who most need intensive support.

Outreach will be provided in two ways. Firstly, workers from the Family Support Service will travel to meet children and families at other venues, including their home, school and other locations close to where the family live to provide 1:1 support. In addition, targeted group programmes will be offered from alternative venues such as local community centres, which will include the more rural parts of

the County, in order to ensure families do not have to travel extensive distances to attend them. This will ensure we offer support to vulnerable families and children on a county wide basis.

What is a Children and Family Centre?

The new Children and Family Centres will bring together services currently provided by the 44 Childrens Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs.

OCC staff and other professionals will use the centres as a base to work with families in need of support. Services from these centres will include case work and a standardised range of group programmes designed to address the key risks and issues affecting families. These programmes will cover issues such as parenting support, domestic abuse support, early attachment, school readiness and education and training for young people and families.

The case work and group programmes will be provided for children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified as needing additional support through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme.

In addition, it is hoped that the Children and Family Centres will provide a base for other organisations to provide services from, for example health visiting and activities run by the voluntary and community sector.

The Children and Family Centres will be open, and providing services, to children and their families during the day and early evening.

Outcomes for children

The Childcare Act 2006 places duties on local authorities in relation to the well-being of children. The local authority believes that the proposed new model of service enables these responsibilities to continue to be met through the Children and Family Centres and outreach services.

Children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being will continue to be supported by universal services provided by health professionals. The Locality and Community Support Service will develop strong links with health professionals within the local area, enabling vulnerable children to be identified and where necessary targeted services put in place to support them.

Services provided by Children's Social Care will continue to be available to protect children from harm and neglect. There will continue to be a clear referral process into safeguarding services to ensure children are protected from harm.

Ensuring that children are ready for school is a key function of Children's Centres and this will remain a priority in the proposed new model of service. Through the targeting of services to those most in need, support will continue to be available to children to prepare them for starting school. Through the continued provision of support in throughout childhood, the service will prepare vulnerable children to take advantage of the opportunities offered by education, training and recreation.

Part 4: The proposed options for how the new children's service could be delivered

We are seeking views on three models for the new service which are outlined below:

Option 1: No universal services. This is the county council's preferred option

Option 2: Limited universal services.

Option 3: Universal services through community investment

The option to make no changes to the current Early Intervention Service has not been included as this is unaffordable, given the budget decisions.

<p>Option 1: No universal services</p> <p>This is the county council's preferred option.</p> <p>The local authority would cease to provide, or commission, any universal services, including stay and play or open access youth sessions.</p> <p>All of the available resources will be used to maximise the number of Children and Family Centres and maximise the capacity of the Family Support Service to provide support to the most vulnerable families through casework, group programmes and outreach.</p> <p>The children and families supported in this option are children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme.</p>
<p>Key elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No universal services funded or provided by the local authority • Creation of a Locality and Community Support Service to support and advise universal services, for example schools, health and community based services • Family Support Service providing case work and programmes of support to children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme • Family Support Service providing targeted support through outreach • 8 Children and Family Centres • 8 designated Children's Centres operating from within the Children and Family Centres • 8 Children and Family Centres offer a venue for partners to deliver services
<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No local authority support to deliver universal services could result in the service becoming stigmatised • Could disadvantage rural communities by located Children and Family Centres in the County's main settlements

Option 2: Limited Universal Services

In this option the local authority would continue to provide, or commission, a limited amount of universal services, for example stay and play or open access youth sessions, within the 8 Children and Family Centres.

The resource to do this would be provided by an increase in the caseloads within the Family Support Service, along with a reduction in the number of group programmes, and the amount of outreach provided by the Family Support Service. The Family Support Service would primarily support families through casework and by providing open access sessions to the wider community.

The children and families supported in this option are children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme.

Key elements

- Limited universal services funded or provided by the local authority within Children and Family Centres
- Creation of a Locality and Community Support Service to support and advise universal services, for example schools, health and community based services
- Family Support Service focussing on providing case work to children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme
- Family Support Service providing limited group programmes and targeted support through outreach
- 8 Children and Family Centres
- 8 designated Children's Centres operating from within the Children and Family Centres
- 8 Children and Family Centres offer a venue for partners to deliver services

Risks

- Compromises the authority's ability to support those children and families most in need
- Could disadvantage rural communities by located Children and Family Centres in the County's main settlements
- Could disadvantage rural communities by limiting the amount of outreach provided by the Children and Family Centres
- Increases caseloads within the Family Support Service

Option 3: Universal Services through community investment

In this option the local authority would provide grant funding to the voluntary and community sector of up to a total of £1,000,000 each year for the delivery of services to families across Oxfordshire in locations across the County.

The resource to do this would be provided by reducing staffing levels within the Family Support Service and consequently the number of Children and Family Centres.

The children and families supported in this option are children in need, those on child protection plans and families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme.

Key elements

- Grant funding made available to the voluntary and community sector to provide services to children and families across Oxfordshire
- Creation of a Locality and Community Support Service to support and advise universal services, for example schools, health and community based services
- Family Support Service focussing on providing case work to children in need, those on child protection plans and a limited number of Oxfordshire's Thriving Families
- Family Support Service providing a small number of targeted group programmes and limited outreach from Children and Family Centres
- 6 Children and Family Centres
- 6 designated Children's Centres operating from within the Children and Family Centres
- 6 Children and Family Centres offer a venue for partners to deliver services

Risks

- Reduced number of Children and Family Centres
- Compromises the authority's ability to support those children and families most in need
- Inability to support all of the families identified through Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme
- Could disadvantage rural communities by located Children and Family Centres in the County's main settlements
- Could disadvantage rural communities by limiting the amount of outreach provided by the Children and Family Centres
- Increases caseloads within the Family Support Service
- Services are available in communities where there is capacity to bid for grant funding, not where need is greatest

Comparison of the proposed options for how the new service could be delivered

For definitions of the terms used in this table please refer to Part 3 of this document.

	Option 1: No universal services	Option 2: Limited universal services	Option 3: universal services through community investment
Services targeted to those children and families most in need?	Yes	Yes	Yes
How many Children and Family Centres?	8	8	6
How many registered Children's Centres?	8	8	6
How many Early Intervention Hubs?	0	0	0
Some universal services available?	No	Yes, limited – provided/commissioned directly by the county council	Yes - via grants to voluntary and community sector
Advice and support provided to schools and community services?	Yes	Yes	Yes
New integrated Family Support Service?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Will there be outreach support to children and families?	Yes	Limited	Limited
Will there be group programmes for children and families?	Yes	Limited	Limited
Will there be grant funding to voluntary and community sector?	No	No	Yes

Where will the Children and Family Centres be in the different options?

The Children and Family Centres will be based in areas of highest need across Oxfordshire. The number and location of the Children and Family Centres varies under the different options.

Under options 1 and 2 it is proposed that there will be 8 Children and Family Centres in the following locations:

North area		Central Area	South area	
Cherwell District	West Oxfordshire District	Oxford City	South Oxfordshire District	Vale of White Horse District
Banbury	Witney	Oxford - Blackbird Leys	Didcot	Abingdon
Bicester		Oxford - Rose Hill / Littlemore		
		Oxford - Barton/Sandhills		

Under option 3 it is proposed that there will be 6 Children and Family Centres in the following locations:

North area		Central Area	South area	
Cherwell District	West Oxfordshire District	Oxford City	South Oxfordshire District	Vale of White Horse District
Banbury	Witney	Oxford - Blackbird Leys	Didcot	
		Oxford - Rose Hill / Littlemore		
		Oxford - Barton/Sandhills		

How have the proposed locations been chosen?

The proposed locations for the new Children and Family Centres have been selected using an evidence-based approach as follows:

1. Define the total number of Children and Family Centres within Oxfordshire;
2. Define the broad geographical spread by assigning a total number of Children and Family Centres to three broad areas within the county (three service areas);
3. Determine the 'ideal' locations of the proposed Children and Family Centres within each service area.

The process of determining the 'ideal' locations of the Children and Family Centres began with the assumption that the main settlements within Oxfordshire were likely to be the most appropriate locations for the Children and Family Centres because of their accessibility in terms of transport links, their geographical spread, and that localised deprivation tends to be concentrated in urban areas.

This assumption of locating Centres in the main settlements was then tested using an algorithm that considered the location of 'need' as defined:

- Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- Prior home locations of children who became looked after by Oxfordshire County Council between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of Children who were subject to child protection plans between 31st March 2011 to 31st March 2015;
- Home locations of families identified in the wider Phase 1 Thriving Families cohort.

These indicators were weighted by population forecasts to give a better indication of where need is likely to be located in the coming years. The algorithm was used to test potential Children and Family Centre locations, checking whether each increased or decreased the distance between Centre and family 'in need'. In this way, locations were identified that minimised the average distance between each Centre and families 'in need'.

By overlaying the data sets on to a map of Oxfordshire, clusters of need emerged.

However, there was some variation between each indicator of the 'ideal' location identified. Therefore the proposed locations could only be determined through further manual interpretation.

Full details of the methodology used can be found in the document: *An assessment of need: the methodology for selecting locations for the new Children and Family Centres*. This is available as Annex A along with the consultation documents.

Part 5: What other options have been considered for a new model of service?

As part of the process for developing the proposed new model, and the three options, a number of alternative proposals were considered. These are set out below, along with information setting out why they were discounted. Further information can be found in the draft Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA). The SCIA will be reviewed following the proposed consultation.

Alternative proposal	Decision
Locating a Children and Family Centre in each of the nine Council Localities	<p>It was suggested that in order to ensure good spread of services across the county we should consider locating at least one Children and Family Centre in each locality. The localities are made up of County Councillor divisions.</p> <p>This approach was discounted as none of the indicators used to investigate areas of greatest need support it as the localities reflect administrative boundaries.</p>
Keeping Early Intervention and social care	Through a single management structure it will be possible to have a comprehensive view of the needs of people within each area and services can be targeted most effectively as a result.

services separate	<p>Maintaining division between complementary services would likely result in multiple handover points for families and families having to repeat their information each time.</p> <p>Additionally, a multi-function team is more efficient financially. It is able to deliver both the preventative and social care services, to provide greater coverage than multiple separate teams that have to cover the same areas.</p> <p>Feedback from key stakeholders demonstrates broad support for an integrated service.</p> <p>For the reasons outlined above this proposal was rejected.</p>
Childrens' Centres and Early Intervention Hub remain separate	<p>This proposal was rejected on the same basis as the one above.</p>
No enhanced support for universal providers	<p>Feedback from key stakeholders during engagement activities supports the view that maintaining strong links between universal providers and the local authority is crucial to the success of the model. All proposals include the creation of a Locality and Community Support Service to work with universal service providers to identify families at risk and co-ordinate the provision of services that prevent needs from escalating.</p> <p>For these reasons this proposal was rejected.</p>
Retaining all current intervention and prevention programmes	<p>Current provision of programmes is not equitable across Oxfordshire, with some programmes only being available in specific centres where the staff trained to deliver them are based. The programmes delivered by workers in the new service will be available across the county, enabling them to be targeted at those who require them most.</p> <p>There is national evidence that supports the effectiveness of certain programmes. Focussing on these services will enable Oxfordshire County Council to deliver the programmes that are most likely to be effective and result in positive outcomes for users.</p> <p>For these reasons the proposal was rejected.</p>
Charging for certain services	<p>Feedback from the engagement process indicated that there may be willingness to accept charges for certain services. Charging for certain services may enable the service to use the income generated to enhance or expand service provision in other areas.</p> <p>However, the costs of administrating a charging model indicate that implementing it would not be practical.</p> <p>For the reasons described above the proposal was rejected.</p>

Part 6: How have decisions been made?

The timeline for the decision making process relating to these proposals is set out below:

February 2014	Council agree that as part of the service and resource planning process for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 savings of £3 million to be achieved through the integration of the Early Intervention Service with Children's Social Care.
May 2014	Inaugural meeting of the cross party Cabinet Advisory Group on Children's Early Intervention Services.
May 2014 - August 2015	Cabinet Advisory Group on Children's Early Intervention Services meets to explore the issues related to the future provision of early intervention services in Oxfordshire.
February 2015	Council agree to further £3 million savings to be achieved through the integration of the Early Intervention Service with Children's Social Care.
June 2015	Cabinet accept the recommendations of the Cabinet Advisory Group on Children's Early Intervention Services which set out proposal for streamlining and refocusing the service in order to achieve the savings and respond to increases in demand for statutory social care services.
June - September 2015	Engagement process undertaken with key stakeholders, including schools, staff, elected members, voluntary and community sector providers, health professionals, parents and young people to inform the development of the proposed new model of service.
September 2015	Service and Resource Planning 2016/17 report to Cabinet identifies the need for the council to make further savings beyond those already agreed by council, with an expectation that options for savings will come from all service areas. An additional £2 million savings are proposed from the Early Intervention budget.
September 2015	Cabinet agree to hold a public consultation on three models for a proposed new service which integrates Early Intervention Service with Children's Social Care, and makes £8 million saving from the budget for Early Intervention.

Part 7: Further information

More detailed background information is available to accompany this consultation. This includes:

- Annex A - An assessment of need: the methodology for selecting locations for the proposed new Children and Family Centres
- Annex B - Report to Cabinet on 23 June 2015: Recommendations of the Cabinet Advisory Group on Children's Early Intervention Services
- Annex C - Report to Cabinet on 15 September 2015: Future Arrangements in Children's Social Care
- Annex D - Children's Centre profiles - these provide information about each of the current Children's Centres

- Annex E - Early Intervention Hub profiles - these provide information about each of the current Early Intervention Hubs
- Draft Service and Community Impact Assessment

We have undertaken a draft Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA) to understand how the changes we have proposed will affect different groups of people in the community. The SCIA will be reviewed following the proposed consultation.

Part 8: Have your say

Oxfordshire County Council is keen to hear from you and there are a variety of ways in which you can tell us your views.

We are strongly encouraging people who can submit comments online to do so. However, we recognise that not everyone has access to the internet or has computer skills and comments can be submitted in writing.

1. Complete the questionnaire by visiting www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation and completing the questionnaire.
2. Alternatively, you can complete a paper copy of the consultation questionnaire which is available at all Children's Centres, Early Intervention Hubs and in county council offices.

You can return it to any children's centre or early intervention hub or send it to the county council using the following FREEPOST address:

Children's Services Consultation
FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

(No further address details required)

3. We will also be holding three open meetings to discuss the proposals, which any member of the public is welcome to attend.

Details of the meetings are as follows:

Wednesday 18 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at Kings Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Monday 23 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at Didcot Civic Centre, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN

Monday 30 November from 6 - 7.30 pm at John Paul II Centre, Webb Court, Causeway, Bicester OX26 6AW

In addition to hearing the views of the residents of Oxfordshire, we are keen to hear from anyone living in a neighbouring county who uses services within Oxfordshire.

Part 9: What happens next?

We will be consulting on these proposals until 23:59 on 10 January 2016.

A final decision about the future model for children's services in Oxfordshire will be taken by the county council's cabinet in spring 2016. This will take into account the findings of the consultation alongside a wide range of other information including financial information, analysis of risk and the service and community impact assessment.

Alternative formats of this consultation are available on request.

These include other languages, large print, Easy Read, Braille and electronic formats. **Please ring** 01865 792422 or email

eiservicesreview@oxfordshire.gov.uk