

Children's Centre Implementation

Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: members of the committee are requested to note the report.

1. Background/Introduction

Action for Children have increased resources into Devon by providing a regional transition team who will oversee the contract implementation. They have also recruited a project manager to manage the process until the new contract is embedded.

Regular meetings are taking place between DCC officers and Action for Children to discuss how transition plans are taking shape for the start of the new contract in April 2018.

Action for Children have provided DCC with a robust risk register on how they intend with partners to mitigate the risks associated with moving to a targeted service within the first year of the contract. The risks will have to be balanced against the requirements in the contract to increase the numbers of families the children's centre are working with through the increased age range alongside the 1 million reduction in budget.

Planning meetings have also taken place between Action for Children, Virgin Care, Public Health Commissioners and DCC officers to map out where universal health services will be delivered by Public Health Nurses from 1 April 2018 and where universal group services will be delivered directly or indirectly by the Children's Centres.

The outcome of this work will enable both organisations to identify areas in the county that will need a coordinated approach to service delivery to ensure families have access to support and advice around their and their children's health in the early days.

2. Action for Children

Action for Children intend to set up a Social Enterprise Vehicle, it will produce a range of initiatives including a commercial arm which will extend the delivery of some evidenced informed **universal** services that will no longer sit within the DCC Children's Centre contract. Places will be held open for families in need of additional help and as a social enterprise any profits will be re invested into the community. It has been agreed that as far as practically possible changes to the current universal service will take place over the first six months of the contract which will give time for any change in service delivery.

They intend to provide **Added Value** by focussing their national fundraising efforts on the Community Thrive programme which is intended to provide funding to develop resilience in communities by equipping parents and volunteers in the Thrive approach. The Thrive Approach draws on the latest research from current neuroscience to help adults understand children's behavior and how they can respond to a child's emotional situation in a way that supports their emotional and social development. They are running a pilot in Crediton where two local councilors will be attending the training. Action for Children have also identified the following direct delivery partners:

- **Exeter Community Initiatives** – ECI will play a key role in delivering the employability element of the contract and working across Devon.

- **CAB** - will deliver a strand of the service that focuses on income maximisation for parents.
- **University of Plymouth** –They have a placement agreement that sees up to 10 social work students, twice per year, joining Action for Children teams.
- **University of St Mark and St John** –Speech and Language student will undertake placements, across the Children's Centres in Devon.

3. Multiple Birth Group Northern Devon

As part of the re-design of Devon's Children Centres, North Devon Children's Centre informed families that due to the increase in targeted work they would be withdrawing from delivering the Multiple Birth group in Barnstaple. Understandably families were concerned that without dedicated support from the centre the group would fold. A meeting took place between the families, Children's Centre, Councillor Biederman and DCC to try and find a solution.

Families understood the difficult situation and it was agreed that with support they would look at becoming a constituted community group where they could employ a member of staff and recruit volunteers. However, this will take some time so as an interim measure for one year the following was agreed;

- Families would look to raise £1,300 which would fund the group for one year
- Employ one member of staff to run the group
- Continued free use of the Children's Centre at Forches Cross Barnstaple
- Action for Children volunteers would continue to support the group
- Families would consider becoming a constituted committee working with North Devon Voluntary Service
- If new volunteers were recruited they would be able to access the Action for Children volunteer programme which includes checking suitability of volunteers and accredited training opportunities.

Councillor Biederman agreed to provide some funding through his locality budget and planned to talk to other North Devon and Torridge members to see if they could do the same. A total of £1,200 has been approved which will fund the group for one year from April 1st, 2018.

In this example parents are keen to work on how they continue to operate the group in the future and how they could possibly grow the service to include more families. This has given them the time to become constituted as a voluntary group with all the safeguards in place and potential for accessing other funds.

4. Future Meeting

Action for Children have offered to attend a meeting in County Hall with Elected Members to explain some of the innovative ideas they have including more detail on the Thrive approach.

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Senior Commissioning Manager – Early Years

Electoral Divisions: All
Cabinet Member for [Children, Schools and Skills](#): Councillor James McInnes
Chief Officer for Children's Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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