Blackpool Children’s Centres

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update on phase 2 of the Children’s Centre review and gain approval for the proposed way forward.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To agree that Children’s Centre Outcomes will target disadvantaged and vulnerable families.

2.2 To make a local decision to redefine Children’s Centre Reach Areas to focus on the most deprived.

2.3 To agree that Children’s Centre funding will be allocated based on need.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 A review of Blackpool Children’s Centres has been underway. Phase 1 of the review ended in August 2014 and saw new Children’s Centre contract principles drafted through a series of appreciate enquiry workshops facilitated by independent consultants commissioned by the Council. The principles were included in the new contracts issued for the transitional year (September 2014 – August 2015). A proportion of the funding for each Children’s Centre was reallocated based on deprivation and need to ensure resource is concentrated on the most vulnerable.

A Children’s Centre Transitional Board was established in February 2014. The Board, made up of representatives from all Children’s Centres, includes parents, partners, governor, frontline staff and the Council. Now that phase 2 of the Children’s Centre
review is underway the Transitional Board is leading the developments during the transitional year and the recommendations from phase 2 are detailed in this report.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council?  
No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget?  
Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

To maintain current status.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

• Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement
• Safeguard and protect the most vulnerable
• Improve health and well-being especially for the most disadvantaged
• Create safer communities and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
• Deliver quality services through a professional, well-rewarded and motivated workforce

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Statutory Guidance puts a duty on Local Authorities to ensure they have sufficient Children’s Centres to meet the needs of young children and parents living in the area, particularly those in greatest need of support. Blackpool currently had 10 Children’s Centres which offers a variety of services to meet local need.

5.2 Ofsted is continuing discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the future of Children’s Centre inspections. In the meantime, children’s centre inspections will continue under the current statutory regulations and inspection framework. If the current timescales remain then the next Blackpool Children’s Centre due an inspection will be Thames around December 2015. 90% of Blackpool Children’s Centre’s were graded as Outstanding or Good as compared to 66% in the North West and 66% in England (Dec 2014). One Children’s Centre in Blackpool has been graded a Satisfactory which equates to 10% compared to 32% in the North West and 32% in England. There were no inadequate grades in Blackpool compared to 10% in the North West and 20% in England.
5.3 **Blackpool Children’s Centres delivers services to families across all thresholds (Universal, Level 2, 3 and 4).** For the last 18 months’ Blackpool Children’s Centres have been accessing the details of young children involved with Social Care. Children’s Centre have worked to establish links with each child’s Social Worker ensuring they are aware of the services available through Children’s Centres. Performance Monitoring had been adapted to ensure Children’s Centres track the registration and access of Level 4 families. Blackpool Children’s Centres have put systems in place to ensure they are routinely invited to all Initial Case Conferences and have work hard to ensure Children’s Social Care is plugged in to their service. At the end of year 2014 91.5% of children under 5 on a Child Protection Plan were registered with Blackpool Children’s Centres and 73.6% of children on a Plan accessed Children’s Centre services.

5.4 **Children’s Centre Outcomes to target disadvantaged and Vulnerable Families.**

As part of the review the Children’s Centre performance monitoring statistical measures have been refreshed and reduced from 50 indicators to 34. Alongside this we have been working with 4Children (commissioned by the Department for Education) to trial a Children’s Centre Outcomes Framework.

Each Children’s Centre will focus on targeted groups and will seek to improve specific outcomes for these groups. The target groups vary across the Children’s Centres ensuring each Children’s Centres offer relates to the needs of the area it serves. The Outcomes Framework feeds into the Children’s Centres Development Plans.

The Outcomes Framework has fed into the Children’s Centres Development Plans and were the basis for the Children’s Centre Annual Conversations (performance reviews) which were held in April/May 2015.

5.5 **Making the local decision to redefine Children’s Centre Reach Areas to focus on the most deprived.**

A ‘reach area’ is a designated geographical area within the local community which is the centre’s catchment area. In Ofsted terms a ‘reach area’ means the number of families with young children living in the defined area served by the children’s centres.

There are currently 10 Children’s Centre Reach Areas in Blackpool and they serve the whole town population of Children aged 0-5 years old (8357). The proposal is that for Ofsted purposes we define the ‘reach areas’ as the number of families living in the bottom 10% deprivation. We will be working with EC Harris (DfE contractors for
reach) to try and undertake this work.

This would mean the whole town population would continue to benefit from access to Universal Children’s Centre services and would be encouraged to register with their local Children’s Centre and take up these services by their Health Visitor. The proposal is that Children’s Centres target those children aged 0-5 who live within areas of Blackpool which are defined as 10% most deprived in England (3640). Children’s Centres would specifically target 43.46% of the children aged 0-5 years old in the town, whilst still providing universal access to services.

5.6 **Children’s Centre funding to be allocated based on need.**

Blackpool Children’s Centre budgets for 2014/15 were set using deprivation and a selection of other data to ensure the funding went to the Centres with the greatest need. To support the transition it was agreed that a base budget was provided to each Centre in the first year of the Children’s Centre review.

The proposal is the 2015/2016 year (starting on the 1st September 2015) and subsequent years that the budgets will be set in a similar way and will continue to be based on need. However the large base budget will not apply (although a smaller one may be considered) and the rest of budget will be allocated based on a formula of need from data.

This will ensure the Children’s Centres serving the most deprived areas will have the resource required to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families they serve. The formula will ensure those centres with the largest number of vulnerable families has a larger portion of the funding in order to improve outcomes for the larger cohort.

The formula takes into consideration the number of children: living in areas of the town that are defined as the 10% most deprived in England, living in poverty, living in workless households, with a Child Protection Plan and Child in Need. The eight Centres were then graded 1-8 on where they were placed for each element and the total influenced the order they were put in for the final allocation.

This would mean that the School based Children’s Centre serving the children in the most in need would receive a larger slice of the total budget for Blackpool School Based Children’s Centres. See example below:
Please note a base budget option rather than a sole capping option was requested by the Head Teachers commissioned to deliver Children’s Centre Services.

5.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.8 List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: List of each Children’s Centre Target Groups 2015/16

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 Childcare Act 2006 and the Sure Start children’s centre statutory guidance April 2013 states Councils must have sufficient Children’s Centres to meet the needs of young children and parents living in the area, particularly those in greatest need of support. Due cognisance to ensure full compliance with this requirement throughout the Children’s Centre review.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 Allocating funding based on need would result in some of the School Based Children’s Centres receiving a reduction in funding from September 2015. The LA does not have details of the percentage each school allocates to Children’s Centre staffing costs – as some are also Academies. Therefore there could be an impact on staffing however there may be no impact on staffing as the saving could be made from running costs or offset by income generation.

Often within School Based Children’s Centres Staffing is split across the site (Centre, Nursery and School) therefore solutions to any potential staffing implications could potentially be found across the site or Academy group.

Centres will be given notice of the change in budget enabling them to forward plan.
8.0  **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 The Children’s Centres will continue to provide Universal services for all families with a focus on those most in need of support.

9.0  **Financial considerations:**

9.1 Based on approved budget 2015/2016 for School Based Children’s Centres.

9.2 There is also currently a commissioning review of the 2 Local Authority Children’s Centre Nursery provisions (Grange Park and Talbot & Brunswick) and Administration/Receptionists.

10.0  **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 The risk to Children’s Centres not focusing on the most deprived is that they continue with a wide focus which resources cannot continue to support and does not comply with current Ofsted requirements to focus on the most in need.

10.2 The risk to Children’s Centres funding not being allocated on need is that because of limited resources going forward those with the largest of families in need will not have the funding to support their work.

10.3 The risk that those centres with reduced funding may chose not to continue to deliver the service. However a base budget or capping will be applied to ensure no centre’s service delivery is significantly affected.

11.0  **Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None

12.0  **Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 None

13.0  **Background papers:**

None
13.0 Decision of Chief Officer

13.1 1. To agree that Children’s Centre Outcomes will target disadvantaged and vulnerable families.

2. To make a local decision to redefine Children’s Centre Reach Areas to focus on the most deprived.

3. To agree that Children’s Centre funding will be allocated based on need.

14.0 Reasons for the Decision of the Chief Officer

14.1 A review of Blackpool Children’s Centres has been underway. Phase 1 of the review ended in August 2014 and saw new Children’s Centre contract principles drafted through a series of appreciate enquiry workshops facilitated by independent consultants commissioned by the Council. The principles were included in the new contracts issued for the transitional year (September 2014 – August 2015). A proportion of the funding for each Children’s Centre was reallocated based on deprivation and need to ensure resource is concentrated on the most vulnerable.

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