

Medium Term Financial Plan Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal in 2024/25

Where 'Yes/No' options please 'bold appropriate answer

Service area: **Children's Centres**

Budget reference: SPTC01 – Services we provide to the community.

Budget proposal in 2024/25 (£): £150,000

Assistant Director/Director: Pip Hesketh/Claire Shiels

EIA review due date: January 2024

Budget Ref.	Budget Proposal	Budget Reduction £			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
CH02	The development of Family Hubs	£150,000		£250,000	

Equality Impacts

Please make High, Medium or Low 'bold' as appropriate

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

1. The Proposal

1.1 Background to proposal

North Somerset is committed to creating a small number of Family Hubs to better serve its communities. Family Hubs are different to Children's Centres; they have a multi-agency offer and serve families with children in a wider age range than Children's Centres. Where they have been implemented successfully, they have achieved high levels of impact for local families through effective early and joined up support; they have also created efficiency savings.

Although a group has been working towards the development of Family Hubs, there is work to do to pick up the pace to support delivery. This includes some further analysis of existing data and addressing some data gaps through the commissioning of further needs assessment work. This will enable a firm and viable model to be developed which we can discuss with community stakeholders and staff.

In 2024/25 the project focus is the development of a new model for the delivery of joined up services for families in their local communities in line with new national Family Hub policy. This will see a different offer of services in communities for families with children aged 0-19 years or 0-25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This is likely to involve delivering services from a smaller number of buildings, with more outreach into communities and education settings and an improved online service offer.

This would mean rationalising the number of Children Centres we operate (14 Centres) by developing a smaller number of Family Hubs which offer a wider range of services than are currently offered in children's centres. This will be supported by offering outreach services supporting the main Family Hub offer. This might mean children's services workers offering services and support nurseries, schools, community centres along with an improved online offer where people get better information, advice and support at times that suit them.

1.2 Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers

There is currently co-location of practitioners and services from a range of different organisations in a number of our children's centres. The current co-location of services is an offer which has evolved over time whereas a Family Hub model allows us to purposefully design a blended offer from the outset.

A key project consideration is the potential impact of any proposed changes on providers who include: Sirona Healthcare, United Bristol Hospital Trust, Springboard Opportunity Group, voluntary and community sector organisations. Children's centres also share spaces with North Somerset Council libraries and maintained nurseries.

It is important to emphasise that a Family Hub model is in essence a more accessible and joined up offer of services for families than currently exists and we will be actively working with a range of organisations through implementation to ensure that we are able to deliver this vision. We are committed to fully engaging our communities and service users in the design and implementation of Family Hubs, as well the organisations who currently provide services and those who may in the future.

Section 2 – What Do We Know?

2.1 Customer/staff profile details – what data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be, affected?

Data analysis of our information about users of children's centre services is limited but a greater data capture of the current reach and take up of services is underway. Family Hubs provide universal and targeted services to communities and in particular those families who have greatest needs. We anticipate that amongst those currently using our Children's Centres, there will be a demographic profile of diversity and social and economic disadvantage as well as special educational needs and disability. Where there is a low take-up from particular groups, we will work with our voluntary and community providers to ascertain whether there is unmet need and opportunity within the design to address this in the future model.

We are also undertaking analysis of the people employed by North Somerset council who use children centre buildings as an office base as well as those who deliver services to families from these spaces to understand the impact on their work.

2.2 What does the data or evidence tell us about the potential impact on diverse groups, and how is this supported by historic experience/data?

Historically children's centre delivery has been focused on meeting the needs of families with young children and actively targeting services towards those who need them the most. This inevitably means that any change will have an impact on a wide range of families from diverse groups. However, it is important to note that the Family Hub model seeks to increase access to services for a wide range of people by focusing on service integration and connection and making it easier for families to get help, so this will be considered during the design phase.

There are important considerations to make when selecting locations for Family Hubs buildings, satellite services, outreach model and online offer to ensure that we take into account what can be barriers to service access for some particular groups including: physical accessibility for people with disabilities; geographical accessibility in terms of transport availability and affordability; digital accessibility in terms of any online service offer – taking account of particular needs of users including need for interpretation and

translation as well as any challenges in relation to access to technology and or internet.

There is an opportunity to consider how we can tailor services more effectively to reach groups who have been less likely to engage with children's centre activities through the development of our online offer including working parents and others who prefer to engage in different ways.

Traditionally, we know that fathers can be less likely to engage with children's centre activities than mothers, and that within certain communities, there are cultural differences in the expectations about how services are provided. We are committed to considering all these issues as we develop a proposed offer and mechanisms for delivery.

2.3 Are there any gaps in the data, for example across protected characteristics where information is limited or not available?

There is limited available information for some users of our services in relations to protected characteristics, with sexual orientation, gender identity, faith not routinely captured in case management systems at present. Additionally, there are limitations to the case management system used to capture information about delivery creating some additional challenges. However, we will put in place additional mechanisms to understand both the needs and preferences of current and future users of the service; and engagement activity with communities on any proposals will seek to capture and understand the impacts on those with protected characteristics.

We will provide this information to the appropriate decision-making body to inform decision making of the future service model.

2.4 How have we involved or considered the views of the people that could be affected?

Formal engagement and consultation with users of the service or with employees has not yet commenced. However, the development of Family Hubs is a national evidence-based model which was developed with a wide and diverse range of users. There is a national programme of support in place to local areas who are seeking to implement this approach and a network of local authorities who are already delivering in this way. We will use this to inform our approach and to ensure that we consider all groups and users as we implement, seeking where possible to mitigate issues around access.

This Equality Impact Assessment was shared with Equality Stakeholders on 12th January 2024. They made the following comments:

Comment	Response
<p>It is difficult to assess the full impact of the proposal without a detailed understanding of the users of the current Children's Centres.</p>	<p>We understand and agree. We will bring an updated assessment back to the steering group as soon as this becomes available.</p>
<p>Concern that the reduction in availability of Children's Centres within a local area will disrupt the benefits that have been achieved through the development of local relationships. For example, the Gypsy and Traveller community in Yeo Valley, Springboard in Weston-super-Mare.</p>	<p>The insight into the needs of the Gypsy Roma Traveller communities is much appreciated. We particularly appreciate that relationships of trust with officers and other professionals providing services are hard won but easily lost if we do not approach the development of services without working through the well established relationships. We are committed to be sensitive to these and building increased trust over time by demonstrating that we have shaped our proposal to reflect their needs effectively.</p>
<p>Access is key to the services that are being offered through the Family Hubs. The development of services should consider culture, literacy levels, disability, and income as all these factors can impact on the way that people access services. The highest levels of access within the building should be included within the design.</p>	<p>We understand our duty to make all services accessible to disabled people and are committed to meeting this. We fully appreciate that there is a risk that needs associated with the diversity of our community may be overlooked because of the relatively low numbers of people within different groups. However, we see the Family Hubs as an opportunity to go further towards inclusive services to promote increased participation and equality between people of different faiths, culture, and races. As we develop our proposals, we will welcome the participation of the Steering Group to hold us to account, bring to our attention matters which we have not already considered and reach agreement about areas where we can improve the accessibility of services.</p>
<p>Moving to more central locations will mean that issues like car parking,</p>	<p>This is an important consideration. Although not directly linked, we do</p>

<p>including accessible parking and access to public transport to the Family Hubs will become critical to those using the centres. There was also a concern re the potential cumulative impact of proposed changes to transport (Home to School and Community Transport) may have on access to Family Hubs.</p>	<p>appreciate the need to consider the cumulative impact of different projects such as changes to community or home to school transport. The principles which underpin a Family Hub are to increase reach and accessibility rather than reduce it so we will carefully consider the ways in which communities can access services. Family Hubs will certainly provide outreach services for communities in other locations and venues</p>
<p>How confident are we in the engagement of diverse communities in the planning and design of services? The Equality Stakeholder Group offered support and commitment to engage in the development of Family Hubs.</p>	<p>We are very committed to this and since meeting the Stakeholder Group, we have secured commitment to include representatives from the Group on the Partnership Board. We warmly welcome the offer from members to continue to participate in discussions with us throughout the development of the proposal.</p>
<p>Concerns that that centralising of Family Hubs will have a disproportionate impact on those who live in rural areas of North Somerset as those that live in urban areas have ready access to public transport, other forms of parental support/parent and carer groups etc.</p>	<p>We recognise that this is a risk, and it is important that we don't give false expectations that there will be more Family Hubs than we are able to deliver. However, we will be actively developing an outreach model and making connections with other services that are delivered across the district so that we can make sure we join up our offers. We have not yet finalised either the location or the number of Family Hubs so there is opportunity to consider accessibility in the development of the proposals.</p>

2.5 What has this told us?

Please see table above.

2.6 Are there any gaps in our consultation, what are our plans for the future?

Formal consultation plans will be developed as part of the implementation plans.

This will include engagement with current users of the services and people who do not currently use the services. This will be through a mixture of online surveys and face to face meetings. This information will be used to inform decision making about location as well as the service delivery model.

One of the ambitions for the Family Hubs is the inclusion of parents and carers in the governance arrangements of the new service provision so that they can be involved in decisions about service design and future developments of the Hubs over time. We will seek to recruit parent/carer representation as part of the project implementation and to actively include people with protected characteristics.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups? Please describe the nature of the impact in 'Summary of Impact' column. You should describe both negative and positive impacts.

Assessment of impact should include the consideration of Public Sector Equality Duties as listed in [section 149 of The Equality Act 2010](#), specifically:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Please indicate the impact level and impact type with an 'X' for each of the groups listed below.

Impact Level

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

Impact Type

+ = Positive, = = Neutral, - = Negative

Impact Level

Impact Type

Summary of Impact

	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		X			X		X	The intention is to create an accessible Family Hub network with greater outreach capability and online presence which will improve service access for some people with disabilities, including those with neurodiversity. However, there will be a reduction in some buildings-based services, and potentially therefore an impact on a small proportion of disabled users who may have to travel further for face-to-face delivery. The extent of this is not yet known and will form part of the consultation and decision making. When designing the new model, we will ensure that we consider how to make services accessible. An important element of the Family Hub model is that it offers services for children with special educational needs and disabilities therefore this will be a key part of the model going forward – including specialist services
People from different ethnic groups		x				X		We recognise that people from different ethnic groups can be more likely to be socially or economically disadvantaged and therefore may have a greater need to access services provided by Family Hubs. Contact with our communities and their representatives throughout the development of our proposals will ensure that we do not make superficial judgements or assumptions about the

				<p>cultural appropriateness of delivery of services. We will expect as a minimum to provide information in a range of community languages but also consider other aspects of race and faith such as prayer spaces and culturally appropriate refreshments, hours of opening etc. The current children's centres host a range of support to different groups such as International Parents group and Ukraine Group – these groups will be included in discussions about the design of the future model.</p>
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)	X	X	X	<p>It is recognised that women are the predominant users of current Children's Centres, so any changes are likely to have an impact on women. Considering the ways that diverse groups access the services is a key consideration.</p> <p>Changing the service delivery model to one which offers a wider range of online services and service outreach into different areas of the community will improve access for some groups, particularly fathers. The co-location of local partners and the development of a rounded 'Start for Life' Offer will improve access to information and support for expectant parents and those in the first years of life.</p> <p>However, there is a potential that there some people including those who are</p>

						pregnant or on maternity leave may have to travel further to receive face to face services.
People who are LGBTQ+		X			X	We do not collect information on this protected characteristic, so it is not possible to measure impact.
People on a low income	X					X Changes to the service delivery model, including provision of face-to-face services may require some people on low incomes to travel further for face to face support and as a result incur additional transport costs or result in a reduction in take up of early help.
People in particular age groups		X		X		The Family Hub model that will be implemented expands the range of services that are offered to wider age range – moving beyond early childhood services to the provision of services for families with children aged 0-19 or 025 for those with SEND, therefore this proposal will have a positive impact of these groups.
People in particular faith groups		X			X	We do not collect data to for this protected characteristic, however learning from other areas suggests there is no reason to believe that there will be any impacts on this group. Service design will need to be sensitive to the needs of faith groups to ensure sensitivity to their needs.

People who are married or in a civil partnership	X		X		We do not collect information on this protected characteristic to measure impact. However, there is no reason to believe that there will be any impact on this group – apart from potential positive impact as the Family hub model includes a requirement to deliver support for parents experiencing parental conflict to improve the co-parenting relationship.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	X		X		We do not collect information on this protected characteristic and are therefore unable to measure impact.

Impact Level					Impact Type			Summary of Impact
	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
<p>Other specific impacts, for example: carers, parents, Armed Forces Community, impact on health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Please specify: Parents and Carers and people living in rural communities</p>	X				X		X	<p>The purpose of the development of family Hubs is to deliver joined up and integrated services for parents and carers that better meet their needs and will therefore have a positive impact on these groups with the delivery of co-located practitioners, a wider service offer and improved online services. However, as we reduce the number of buildings that we deliver services from, there may be a requirement for some families to travel further for face-to-face service delivery which could impact on the uptake of these services and may mean that their needs are not met early enough.</p>

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other service areas?

This is an impact that occurs when you consider services or activities together; a change or activity in one area may create an additional impact somewhere else, this maybe within or outside of your directorate or service area. For example changing the venue for delivery of a service and there being a change to public transport in the same area

No

Yes

Changes to the service delivery model may have an impact on other services such as libraries where spaces are currently shared. Partnership work will need to be undertaken to understand the impact on those services of us changing the venues we deliver services from.

The Family Hubs project is not directly impacted by transport projects running concurrently but we commit to regularly reviewing this as the project develops.

It is also noted that the closure of Castlewood will result in the reduction in available office space for NSC staff.

Section 4 – Staff Impact

Is there an anticipated impact on North Somerset Council staff as a result of this proposal?

No

Yes

The development of a new model of service delivery will inevitably have an impact on all those delivering services in current children's centres, early help and in the early years' service. It is anticipated that this will most likely be in relations to ways of working but may also affect centre of duty for officers who may need to travel to different places for work.

If there is going to be a reduction in the number of posts please indicate the number of FTE

This proposal seeks to reduce spend on buildings and associated costs rather than specifically reduce head count. However, it is likely that some roles may change through the life of this programme and active consideration of opportunities for redefining roles and responsibilities will be part of the implementation. This position will be kept under active review.

Section 5 - Action Plan

Action taken/to be taken	How will it be monitored?
Engagement/consultation on proposals with users of service with capturing of protected characteristics to better understand potential impacts off changes and consideration for service design. This will include further analysis of equality issues.	Through the Family Hub Partnership Project Board
Service design principles to be agreed and to include considerations such as public transport availability, service delivery times, outreach models and online offer	Through Family Hubs Partnership Project Board initially and following set up through regular reporting to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board
Representatives from the Equality Stakeholder Group to be included as members of the Family Hub Partnership Board	Through the Family Hub Partnership Project Board

If negative impacts remain after the above actions have been taken, please provide an explanation below.

There is an intention to have an enhanced service offer through Family Hubs through increasing the age range of the service offer, formalising an outreach model, and improving the online service offer, however there will remain a small number of people who will have to travel further for face-to-face services. This will need to be carefully monitored and understood through the life of the programme, with those on lowest incomes most likely to be affected. We will continue to engage with the ESG through the life of the project to find ways to mitigate the impact of changes.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with your service users.

Engagement events with users of the services, a communication campaign on the Family Hub offer will be essential along with a public consultation with communities on the new service model.