

DRAFT Initial Budget Equality Impact Assessment

1. The Project

Directorate: Children's Services

Theme or area: **Transfer of Nurseries**

Lead Officer: Rupa Parmar

Date: 3 December 25

		Budget reduction (£)		
Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CHS06	Review service delivery models for maintained nurseries, which are a discretionary service, to reduce the financial subsidy recognising that there are other providers that may be better placed to deliver more effectively. This proposal also includes the review and reduce the operational costs of services, e.g building requirements and facilities.	£157,000	£300,000	

Description of the project:

North Somerset Council operates three in-house nursery settings (Early Birds Nursery, Little Waves and Ashcombe Nursery) that deliver statutory childcare for pre-reception age children. All three nurseries provide quality childcare with an emphasis on a holistic family support approach which incorporate early intervention and preventative safeguarding of the most vulnerable children in NSC.

In recent years two of the three nurseries have operated below their capacity due to recruitment and retention issues which are not only local, but also a national issue. For context and information the government has launched a national recruitment campaign to try and address the issue for both early years and wraparound childcare, it is called 'Do something big, work with small children' <https://earlyyears Careers.campaign.gov.uk/>, however, as yet it has not resulted in a positive impact locally. As a result of this and the and the falling birth rates locally, the financial viability of the nurseries is proving to be unsustainable given high salary and resourcing costs, and most importantly there being

sufficient childcare provision in the local areas in which the nurseries are operating.

This project proposes to progress plans to divest the three nurseries to the respective Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) where they are currently co-located with a view the provision will be incorporated into their existing Early Years and wrap-around childcare. This will ensure families will have continuity of the service offer with a stronger likelihood that the services will be enhanced and extended from the current delivery and offer which is limited given the staffing challenges.

Proposals include negotiations with the MATs to ensure appropriate HR and TUPE considerations are put in place to support the workforce and protect employment rights through any agreed transition. It is acknowledged through the proposals could result in some roles being made redundant as part of any service transfer but this will be explored with efforts made to keep these to a minimum.

If the negotiations with the MATs are exhausted without transfers agreed there will be a need to review whether a private provider should be explored.

Summary of changes:

It is proposed that whilst the operational management and responsibility will move over to the respective MATs that the delivery of pre-school childcare will continue to be delivered to maintain local sufficiency and to meet parental demand. The following are possible changes we foresee as part of this transfer:

- Service offer will continue unchanged, however may increase given the wider offer schools through wraparound childcare and Early Years offer. The transfer proposals are a means of trying to get the nurseries on a financially sustainable and commercial footing.
- We will explore whether all service provision needs to continue to be offered from the current settings or whether school sites have the space on their footprint for the nursery to be incorporated.
- It is proposed that Nursery staff will transition as a means of maintaining service delivery and we will work with the MATs to encourage this where this is feasible and within their business modelling. Management capacity will be considered with the same approach however recognising most Primary Schools have EYFS Leads as part of their establishment.
- Once MATs have developed their business models for the nurseries and progressed these through their due diligence and governance processes. It is envisaged the Council will undertake any necessary HR processes in respect of the current workforce to support any TUPE process required.
- It is not envisaged that there will be any detrimental impact to children, parents and carers currently using the nurseries, however, the Council will undertake to communicate with parents and carers to notify them of any changes in advance of any transfer of services.

Are any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?

Yes No

If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?

Budget Proposal	Year of assessment	Budget Reference

If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?

N/a

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

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

+ = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)				X	X	
People from different ethnic groups				X	X	
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)		X			X	
People who are LGBTQ+				X		
People on a low income	X					X
People in particular age groups		X				X
People in particular faith groups						
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents.						
Please specify: This may have an impact to care experienced parents if the MATS change/increase fee structures making childcare unaffordable		X				X

3. Explanation of customer impact

We anticipate an overall neutral impact to most groups identified in the table above as childcare services are typically chargeable services that are openly accessible to all sectors of the community, with the majority of the provision being delivered by the private, voluntary and independent sector.

In respect of the proposed changes, we do recognise changes to the service management and delivery may result in increased fee structures at each of the settings which could impact parents on low incomes, young families and those who are care experiences and young parents. However, from early discussions with MATs they have expressed a commitment to meeting local need given the alignment to the nurseries being feeders settings for their schools.

It is also acknowledged that Little Waves and Ashcombe are based in some of the most deprived wards in North Somerset and therefore the nurseries are likely to provide essential early education and childcare for children living in low income families. There are however, a number of different types of childcare providers in both areas that families could choose to move their child/ren to should the schools make changes that no longer meet their needs.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

As mentioned above, once schools have confirmed their interest and future business models for the nurseries there will be a comprehensive staff consultation that will be supported with regular communications through the Early Years management structure as well as senior leadership from both the local authority and respective MATs.

In respect of communications to service users, we anticipate arranging joint communications with the MATs to inform families of key points in the transition and any operational changes involved in the transfers.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal?	Yes	No
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Explanation of staff impact

The proposals could have an impact to the current workforce should the MATs wish to reduce the headcount and use some of their existing EYFS and administrative staff. This will be reviewed as negotiations are progressed and once the MATs have developed their future service models.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The proposals may see additional demand for early support services either through Family Hubs, universal Early Help providers and possibly targeted family support.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Risk of fee increases once services transfer making childcare unaffordable for (care experienced) parents on low incomes	Profiling of current service users and fees structures	HoS EY	Dec – Jan'26

7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

Insert any service manager comments here.

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Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? **Yes** No

Please note that if this assessment indicates a potential 'medium' or 'high' impact on any protected or significant group a further, more detailed assessment will be required.

If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed? January 2026

Service Manager: Rupa Parmar

Date: 4 December 2025