

APPENDIX

CHILDREN'S CENTRES REVIEW – PROPOSED ELEMENTS FOR INCLUSION IN CONSULTATION

This document sets out options for change to Redbridge's children's centres under four headings, with the impacts of each summarised in terms of service delivery and finances:

- A. Designation and number of centres
- B. Charging users for a range of activities
- C. Charging partners for use of centres
- D. Changes to staffing

We propose that the upcoming 12-week consultation examines the impacts and feasibility of implementing each of these options, with a final decision on which options to take being made by Cabinet in 2019.

It is important to note that some of the options interact with each other and the Cabinet's final decision will need to consider carefully those interactions, as the overall objective is to develop a sustainable model for the future delivery of children's centre services. For example options covered under section B below would impact on the type of management structure that would be required and therefore on options covered under section D.

A. Designation and number of centres

Current position: Redbridge children's centres comprise eight "hub" centres plus thirteen "spoke" centres. Hub centres are open to the public from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Spoke centres are open to the public as and when a session is being run by the Children's Centre staff or by a partner agency.

The table below shows the hub and spoke centres under the current model.

Locality	Hub Centres	Spoke Centres
North	Cranbrook	Gearies
		Redbridge
	Newbury	Peabody
		Christchurch
	Hainault	Fullwell
Forest		
South	Loxford	St Luke's
	Thackeray Drive	Chadwell
		All Saints
Albert Road	Winston Way	
West	Aldersbrook	Wanstead
	Orchard	Oakdale
		Ray Lodge

Options

Option A.1 Convert Aldersbrook from a hub children's centre into a spoke children's centre.

Commentary and impacts

In the current model a manager (Group Lead) oversees children's centre services across a hub and its spokes, supported by an Assessment & Progress Officer. By reducing the number of hubs the number of both Group Leads and Assessment & Progress Officers could be reduced by one. This would save around £60,000.

Option A.2 Focus provision in better-used high-usage centres

Commentary and impacts

Under this option there would continue to be at least nine spoke children's centres across the borough sitting alongside the high usage hub centres. Four current/projected low usage spoke centres would close under this option, meaning that activities would no longer be available there. The four current/projected low usage centres are: Chadwell, Forest, Oakdale, Winston Way.

Oakdale CC runs a session for babies and a self-weigh per week and the rest of the time the centre is used by the schools.

Chadwell CC runs a baby group and a parent-led session each week and the rest of the time it is used by the library service.

Forest CC delivers six sessions per week three of which are delivered by partner agencies.

Winston Way CC hosts seven courses for adults with creche facilities per week all of which are delivered by partner agencies.

The level of children and adult participation at these centres to date in 2018 has been:

Centre	No. of children	No. of adults
<i>Chadwell</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Forest</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Oakdale</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>117</i>
<i>Winston Way</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>159</i>

This option would result in more efficient use of staff time in the remaining children's centres, but would potentially increase travel distances for people attending children's centres. The costs of running these four centres are around £40,000 and so this amount could be saved under this option.

The nearest alternative children's centres and walking distances are summarised below:

Spoke proposed to be closed	Nearest alternative (walking distance)	Second nearest alternative (walking distance)
<i>Chadwell</i>	<i>Thackeray Drive (0.9 miles)</i>	<i>All Saints (1.4 miles)</i>
<i>Forest</i>	<i>Hainault (1.4 miles)</i>	<i>Fulwell (1.4 miles)</i>
<i>Oakdale</i>	<i>Orchard (1.0 mile)</i>	<i>Wanstead (1.3 miles)</i>
<i>Winston Way</i>	<i>Albert Road (0.3 miles)</i>	<i>Loxford (0.4 miles)</i>

B. Charging users for a range of activities

Current position: All children's centre activities are available free to users, regardless of individuals' ability to pay.

Children's centres have a positive impact on the children and their families who use them, and it is therefore desirable that as many activities are provided free of charge or at rates which are subsidised by the Council to keep prices low and enable the largest number of families to access them. Given the budgetary pressures it may not be able to continue with the current free model.

The following activities which are currently delivered in children's centres could be run with participants paying in order to enable them to continue to run, but at a reduced cost to the Council:

Active Healthy Kids	Parenting - Parent Gym
Baby Massage	Park Events
Baby Music	Rhyme Time - Multilingual
Baby Rhyme Time	Stay & Play
Brilliant Boys	Story & Rhyme Time
Busy Babies	Summer FUN
Busy Toddlers	Toddler Music
Chatter Matters	

In all the options in this section it is assumed that there would continue to be free access to these activities for lower income families. In assessing eligibility for free access the Council could use the same methodology as is used for free funding for childcare for 2 year-olds¹. This would mean that around 30% of participants would not have to pay, with the Council continuing to fund the costs of their participation.

Options

Option B.1 Introduce a flat rate charge for each activity attended to pay for the staff costs (free for lower-income families)

Commentary and impacts

Based on

(a) the existing level of universal service delivery (24,000 participants per annum, of whom around 7,000 would be eligible for free access) and

(b) estimated staffing costs

the charge per participant would be £9 per session. If volumes were unaffected by the introduction of a charge at this level the income from this charge would be around £150,000. However, it is considered that in fact many families would be put off by such a charge and volumes might fall by perhaps 60% amongst those who would have to pay, meaning that income would be closer to £60,000. If the lower volume of participants could be translated into reduced staffing the number of staff could be reduced, saving around £90,000.

Option B.2 Introduction of £2 charge (free for lower-income families)

¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

Commentary and impacts

A lower level of charge would be expected to limit the reduction in numbers attending children's centre activities (compared to Option B.1 above) – maybe -2% compared to the current levels. This Option would bring in around £35,000 of income.

Option B.3 Introduction of £4 charge (free for lower-income families)

Commentary and impacts

A charge level set in between Options B.1 and B.2 might result in a reduction of around 10% in participation compared to current levels, generating around £65,000 income but enabling a small reduction in delivery staff, saving a further £15,000.

C. Charging partners for use of centres

Current position: A wide range of partners are given access to use children's centres for delivering their services (eg NELFT, IAPT, Vision, voluntary sector organisations) without charge because they contribute to children's and families' wellbeing.

Options

Option C.1 Negotiate with partners to secure financial contributions towards the cost of running children's centres

Commentary and impacts

With reduced funding the Council is less able to continue to subsidise other partners activities to the same extent as currently. It is recognised that all publicly-funded agencies are under significant financial pressure and therefore paying for hire of children's centres may not easily be absorbed within partners' budgets. It is hoped that partner agencies will see the value of continuing to operate in children's centres and so be willing to make a financial contribution to secure that access.

The amount of income generated will depend on the outcome of negotiations.

D. Changes to staffing

Current position: The service employs 53.6 full-time equivalent employees (FTE). Staffing costs represent around 90% of the costs of providing the service and it is therefore unlikely that substantial savings can be achieved without impact on staffing levels. The staffing resources can be summarised as follows in terms of types of activity undertaken:

Staff group	Responsibility	Total FTE	Delivery FTE	Management FTE	Admin FTE
Core management	Borough-wide and locality management	3.0	0.0	3.0	0.0
Group Leads	Oversee hub and spoke centres and contribute to delivery	8.2	3.7	4.5	0.0
Assessment & Progression Officers	Administration and in-centre reception duties	8.0	0.0	0.0	8.0
Development Officers	Undertake project work with partners and contribute to delivery	5.6	4.2	1.4	0.0
Family Support Workers	Targeted support for children and families and delivery of courses	28.9	28.9	0.0	0.0
TOTAL		53.6	36.7	8.9	8.0
COST £'000		2,080	1,390	470	220

Options

Option D.1 Introduce new Early Years Practitioner role

Commentary and impacts

Currently most delivery work is undertaken by Family Support Workers (FSWs, LBR salary scale 6). It is considered that Early Years Practitioners (scale 4) could be employed to deliver most of the universal services, freeing up FSWs to focus on targeted work with more vulnerable children and families.

The pay differential between scale 6 and scale 4 would result in a saving of around £35,000 if there were six fewer FTE at scale 6 and six more at scale 4.

Option D.2 Reduce number of management staff

Commentary and impacts

In the current structure the majority of management effort is focused on overseeing delivery in local centres, with eight Group Leads each being in charge of activities within a hub and its associated spokes, as well as themselves being involved in delivery. In addition there is a core management team of 3.0 FTE to manage the service across the borough, supported by 5.6 Development Officers.

Option A.1 above would reduce the number of Group Leads by one. Reducing by more than this would mean that local management would be further stretched, limiting the level of support for operational staff, reducing the level of quality assurance about what is delivered in centres and thus risking performance declining.

Reducing the central core team would push additional responsibilities onto Group Leads.

Indicative reductions in management staffing and their financial impacts are shown in the table overleaf. Local management is assumed to be delivered by 7.0 x Group Leads, each one spending an average of 55% of their time on management rather than delivery.

% reduction in FTE	No. FTE after reduction, (balance between local-central)	Financial savings
10	8.0 (3.9-4.1)	£50,000
25	6.7 (3.9-2.8)	£120,000
40	5.3 (3.9-1.4)	£190,000

Option D.3 Reduce number of delivery staff

Commentary and impacts

Each of the Options in section B above could result in some level of reduction of activity and this could be translated into reduction in the number of delivery staff required. However, even if none of the Options to introduce charges were approved there would still likely need to be reductions in delivery staffing in order to help the Council balance its budget. A reduction in the number of delivery staff could lead to one or all of the following:

- a) A narrower programme of activities in centres (smaller range)*
- b) A more restricted offer (activities only run with a certain amount of participants)*
- c) Reduced support for partner agency delivery in centres*

As far as possible the Council would want to protect the resources devoted to direct delivery for children and families, and whilst it is not possible to provide complete protection the range of reductions that is suggested is lower than that for management (Option D.2) to reflect this priority.

% reduction in FTE	No. FTE after reduction	Financial savings
5	34.9	£70,000
15	31.2	£210,000
25	27.5	£350,000

FINANCIAL IMPACTS SUMMARISED

Option	Estimated financial impact £'000
A.1 – Aldersbrook converts to spoke	-60
A.2 – Close four spokes centres	-40
B.1 – £9 charge	-150
B.2 – £2 charge	-35
B.3 – £4 charge	-80
C.1 – Charge partners	TBC
D.1 – New EYP role	-35
D.2 – Reduce management staffing	-50 to -190
D.3 – Reduce delivery staffing	-70 to -350