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REPORT TO:	Cabinet 26 July 2021
SUBJECT:	Croydon Best Start
LEAD OFFICER:	Debbie Jones, Executive Director Children, Families and Education Shelley Davies, Director of Education Bianca Byrne, Head of Service Commissioning & Procurement (Corporate)
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming Children, Young People and Learning
WARDS:	All
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>Croydon Best Start Children’s Centres deliver child development and school readiness services as part of a wider Best Start programme for children under 5 years. To enable Best Start services to support children and families more consistently across the borough and make sure we work in partnership to engage with and support our most vulnerable families, the council has considered how best to deliver services so young families most in need get the right help.</p> <p>Best Start has always placed parents at the heart of the programme, and actively involves parents in reviewing services and listening to what families need. Council proposals for a Children’s Centre Hub and Spoke model will work together with other Best Start partners and the voluntary and community sector to welcome families wherever services are, and build relationships that support child development, positive and resilient parenting and good health outcomes for very young children.</p> <p>Respondents to the consultation identified the value of Children’s Centre services in supporting their child’s development and also the importance for parents and carers in being able to attend services locally. Children’s Centres have been “a lifeline” to many parents seeking support for their child through targeted services or support and advice in relation to family life. The Council have heard through the consultation, that there will be a significant impact on communities in the South of the borough and the Shirley ward if the proposed model is agreed. In response, the Council has revised its original proposals and this paper presents a 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes Children’s Centre model which will now include both Purley Oaks and Shirley Children’s Centres as Children’s Centre Spokes.</p>	

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Supporting children and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable remains a priority for Croydon. Improving school readiness outcomes, particularly the acquisition of speech and language continues to be a focus across the Early Years. Involving parents and carers is key. Listening to what they say and taking their views into account in the development of the new service model demonstrates the Council's commitment to involve residents' in decision-making and ensures the right investment in services which best meet their needs.

PRIORITIES AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING /POLICY CONTEXT

Croydon Renewal Plan

These services are aligned to the council's new priorities and ways of working in which we will:

- Live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents
- Focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough
- Follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic justice
- Focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford.

The proposals in this paper meet the criteria for essential expenditure in accordance with the financial guidance.

Policy Context

The *Best Start for Life, Early Years Review Report* (March 2021) sets out a new requirement for local authorities to demonstrate how they will improve support for children and their parents during the first 1000 critical days and how they intend to achieve new national goals.

Legislation

Under the provision of the Childcare Act 2006 and Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, the Council has a statutory duty for the provision of early childhood services. The Act requires the Council to:

- Make arrangements to secure that early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner, to facilitate access to those services and maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- Ensure that such consultation is carried out before making significant changes
- Ensure sufficiency of children's centre provision to meet local need.

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Croydon Best Start

Croydon Best Start is a partnership approach in delivering statutory early childhood services to support families from pregnancy until their child starts school. Across the partnership, midwives, health visitors, children's centres, early years and the voluntary sector work together to deliver prevention and early intervention to improve children's outcomes, particularly for those most in need.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Proposals in this paper includes the Procurement Strategy for new services. If agreed, the Council would be committing to invest an aggregate value of £3.436m over the full term of the contracts (1st December 2021 to 31st March 2024) to improve the outcomes for children aged 0-4years.

In the Renewing Croydon proposals Best Start Children's Centres were asked to deliver the model within a budget of £3.46m. The target savings achieved are therefore £535,000 with a further £660,000 proposed as part of the MTFs savings programme. This represents a reduction of £1m from the original budget for Best Start Children's Centres and a further £195,000, reducing the budget for Parent Aspirations and Parenting Skills services, delivered through a new model consulted on with relevant users of the service.

The financial impact incorporates:

- The outcomes from the consultation on the proposed Children's Centre Hub and Spoke model.
- A further budget reduction of £195,000 to Parenting Aspirations and Parenting Skills services to minimise the impact on Children's Centres should the full effect of the total savings be applied. The model for delivering these services remains the same.
- The new budget for Best Start services is £1,431,533 pa.
- New contracts for services would be brought in line with the Council's financial year budget setting cycle. Contracts would be let for 2 years and 4 months, terminating March 2024.
- Funding for these Contracts would be met from the Council's General Fund.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO: 3721CAB

This is a Key Decision as defined in the Council's Constitution. The decision may be implemented from 1300 hours on the expiry of 5 working days after it is made, unless the decision is referred to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee by the requisite number of Councilors.

REASON FOR URGENCY: The urgency arises to meet the procurement deadline of November 2021 after initial consultation was delayed from January to

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May 2021 due to the consultation on the Croydon Renewal Plan and approval of Council.

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below:

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 To approve the re-design of the Best Start Children's Centres into a 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes locality model to provide greater efficiency and co-ordination of service delivery within a reduced budget. This recommendation has been informed by public consultation.
- 1.2 To note that the Director of Commissioning and Procurement as Chair of the Contracts & Commissioning Board has approved the Procurement Strategy contained in this report and a number of waivers in accordance with Regulations 19.2 of the Council's Contracts and Tender Regulations. The Procurement Strategy will potentially result in Contract awards for a maximum value of £1,431,533, of which for Lot 1, Child Development and School Readiness services is £1,162,533 and for Lot 2, Parent Aspirations and Parenting Skills services is £269,000. Contracts will be for a term of 2 years and 4 months.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 In May 2021 the Council consulted on a proposed redesign of Children's Centres into a 3 Hubs and 6 Spokes service model. The proposal identified:-

- Ceasing funded services at Purley Oaks Children's Centre
- Closing Shirley Children's Centre and,
- A new delivery point at PIP House to service families in the North East of the borough

2.2 The content of this report has been endorsed by the Contracts and Commissioning Board.

CCB ref. number	CCB Approval Date
CCB1680/21-22	21/07/2021

2.3 Residents were asked their views on the proposed 3 Hubs and 6 Spokes delivery model and their views on the impact of services to inform future

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delivery. The Council received 1365 responses from residents and other stakeholders to the consultation.

- 2.4 Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree that the proposed 3 Hubs and 6 Spokes model for Children's Centres would provide the right services, in the right places. Of the 936 responses to this question:

- 725 (53.2%) said they 'disagreed or strongly disagreed'
- 77 (5.7%) said they 'agreed or strongly agreed'

- 2.5 Significantly, 408 (29.9%) of respondents said they would be directly affected by the proposal to cease services at Purley Oaks Children's Centre, and 182 (13.3%) said they would be directly affected by the proposal to close Shirley Children's Centre.
- 2.6 Key concerns for residents were in relation to accessibility, reduction in services, loss of support, impact on children's development and impact on mental health and wellbeing. In addition, respondents raised concerns that there are Council proposals to reduce library services, and the proposed closure of Purley Leisure Centre. The combination having a disproportionate effect on families with young children.

A few comments are included below for illustration:

"... I look forward to going each week, taking any worries with me and knowing I can share them while being helped to bond with my baby. And on the days when getting out the house feels hard, knowing the location is just a walk away makes all the difference. "

"I understand cuts have to be made but I worry that reducing the amount of children's centres would lower the amount of people who get access to their services"

"I can easily walk to Shirley Children's Centre but have no easy access to any of the other centres as I do not have a car. Also Shirley library considering to be closed which also offers a space and activities for young children and parents, so Shirley will be losing 2 essential free local services."

- 2.7 In addition to the online survey, a number of engagement events took place with community groups and Headteachers. The Council also received 90 letters from pupils at Purley Oaks Primary school voicing their concerns with the proposal to cease funded services from Purley Oaks Children's Centre, written responses from one councilor, one MP and from current parents who use services delivered by the Children's Centre.
- 2.8 The Council needs to ensure it prioritises the right services for its residents. The consultation raises significant concerns regarding accessibility and reduction in services, particularly in the South of the borough and in Shirley

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Ward.

- 2.9 Children's Centres provide universal services and are a gateway to more targeted support for families. Access to provision is critical, particularly for the most vulnerable, who would have been more impacted by the pandemic and lockdown restrictions.
- 2.10 The consultation response, has allowed the Council to consider a different approach to delivery and to ensure ease of access to services. The Council is recommended to retain Purley Oaks and Shirley Children's Centres as part of a coordinated Children's Centre 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes delivery model for Croydon.
- 2.11 Members are asked to note this report also outlines the agreed Procurement Strategy for new Contracts for services.

3 DETAIL

3.1. Background

3.1.1 A key finding in the recent report (*Best beginnings in the early years: Technical report one, July 2020*), the Children's Commissioner highlighted that 'Children with lower attainment at EYFS¹ are more likely to have worse academic and non-academic outcomes, even after taking into account their baseline characteristics'. And her final report (*Best beginnings in the early years: A proposal for a new early years guarantee to give all children in England the best start in life, July 2020*) suggests the following "Essentials for the early years":

- Loving, nurturing relationships with parents and carers
- A safe home free from stress and adversity
- The right help to develop good language and other cognitive skills
- Support to manage behaviour and regulate their emotions
- Good physical and mental health and access to healthcare

3.1.2 The *Best Start for Life* policy paper outlines the Government's vision for local authorities working with local partners, to publish their *Start for Life offer* providing universal and universal+, health and care services that meet the needs of specific community groups.

3.1.3 Croydon's vision and ambition is that all children and young people will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs. To achieve this, the Council continues to ensure every child and young person can access high quality education and youth provision, starting in the early years.

¹ Early Years Foundation Stage

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

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- 3.1.4 The local authority has a duty under the Childcare Act 2006, to provide early childhood services in an integrated manner that is sufficient to meet local need. Croydon Best Start and Children's Centres is the model adopted to deliver these statutory services, providing a pathway into targeted support when it is needed most. Best Start is integral to the Croydon Partnership Early Help Network to improve outcomes for children in the borough.
- 3.1.5 As reported to Cabinet by the Director of Education (March 2021) despite Croydon's level of Good Levels of Development (GLD) remaining above national figures, improving school readiness outcomes, particularly the acquisition of speech and language remains a focus across the Early Years. Areas for development identified for the Early Years are to:
- Reduce the attainment gap between the average and the lowest achieving pupils in language and literacy
 - Further narrow the gap between children eligible for free school meals and those not eligible
 - Ensure the Integrated 2 Year Old Review is fully embedded across the Borough
 - Improve the health of children under 5 years by reducing the number of children at age 5 classed as 'overweight' or obese'
- 3.1.6 In addition, Ofsted data as at 31.8.20 showed that the proportion of Croydon childcare providers on the Early Years Register judged to be good or outstanding was 95%. This is in line with the London average of 95% and slightly below the national average of 96%.
- 3.1.7 A Partnership Early Years and Childcare Strategy is currently in development and will contribute to the Council's Vision for children and young people.

3.2 Croydon Best Start

- 3.2.1 Croydon Best Start was launched in April 2016 following Cabinet approval in December 2014 (Min.A112/14). Best Start brought together providers delivering services for babies, children and their families from pregnancy to school; to work in partnership and maximise resources to meet the needs of babies, children and their parents and carers as early as possible.

Croydon Best Start offers a range of services to support children's health and development, and school readiness outcomes, along a pathway of early learning into early education and Reception (see picture below):



3.2.2 Recognising not all families wish to access services in this way, a targeted outreach programme is delivered from Libraries and community venues in partnership with local community groups. Best Start services include:

- Child development and school readiness activities
 - Baby massage
 - Stay and play early learning sessions
 - Speech and Language Chatterbox groups
 - 1 to 1 family support
- Parent Infant Attachment
- Parenting Aspirations and Parenting Skills services
 - Community capacity building
 - Peer to Peer groups
 - Peer to Peer home visiting
 - Peer led parenting programmes
 - Employability support
 - Group support for parents with children who have social communication difficulties

3.2.3 An integrated outcomes framework brings together statutory and key performance data to evidence outcomes and the impact services are making for children and their parents (see below):

Best Start long term outcomes	Best Start medium term outcomes
Children, young people and their families enjoy greater independence & financial stability	Parents/carers are self-reliant and have strong and supportive social networks Parents/carers can access employment and training
Children and young people enjoy improved educational attainment	Children are prepared and ready for school
Children, young people and their parents/carers enjoy emotional wellbeing	Children are emotionally well Parents/carers are emotionally well
Children, young people and their parents/carers enjoy physical wellbeing	Children are healthy and physically well Parents/carers are healthy and physically well
Services are more responsive and consistent	Children are safe and protected from harm Practitioners are confident and skilled and work together to deliver high quality and inclusive services

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- 3.2.4 Implementation of the *Best Start for Life* policy paper will identify new national goals at which point the Best Start Outcomes Framework will be reviewed.
- 3.2.5 In addition to hosting the delivery of commissioned services, Children's Centres host the delivery of other services in a partnership approach with midwifery, health visiting services, parenting practitioners and early learning providers; fulfilling the core service offer as set out in the Sure Start Children's Centre statutory guidance for early childhood services. Key partners delivering this work include health services, the voluntary community sector (VCS) and Council services.
- 3.2.6 Croydon Best Start services fulfil the essential spend criteria in accordance with the financial guidance.

3.3 Proposed redesign of Best Start Children's Centres

3.3.1 Current Model

There are 9 designated Children's Centres and 11 Service Access Points where either Children's Centre services are delivered, or from where 2 year old (2YO) funded places are offered to families (see picture below):

Current Children's Centre Service model with 9 Designated Children's Centres			
Children's Centre	Service Access point (Children's Centre Delivery)	Service Access point (2YO Funded Provision)	Service Access point (Health Delivery: Midwifery and Health Visiting)
North Locality			
Kensington Avenue	Ecclesbourne Winterbourne Thornton Heath	Norbury Manor Thornton Heath	Winterbourne
Central Locality			
Crosfield Shirley Selhurst Aerodrome Purley Oaks	Malling Close Woodside Canterbury Road Peppermint	Tunstall Canterbury Road Peppermint	Selhurst Aerodrome
South Locality			
New Addington Woodlands Byron	Castle Hill Sanderstead	n/a	Castle Hill Byron

- 3.3.2 Under the current model of Children's Centres, and pre-Covid, a programme of services were delivered from each designated Children's Centre, from Service Access Points and other community outreach venues. Services have had to scale back due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. Services have evolved into a hybrid model of bookable face to face and virtual sessions. Best Start services are currently delivering in accordance with a Covid recovery plan, which is regularly reviewed with the service and commissioners.

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3.3.3 Proposed 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes model

The Council has considered the views of its residents and these responses have allowed us to consider the model of delivery of services. The new proposed Children's Centre model will include all 9 pre-existing Children's Centre locations, into a 3 main Children's Centre Hubs and 8 Spokes managed by the main Hub service model. Shirley and Purley Oaks Children's Centres will be retained as Spokes, with the latter identified as a Spoke in South Locality.

Proposed new Children's Centre Service 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes Service model			
Children's Centre Hub	Children's Centre Spoke	2YO Funded Provision	Health Delivery (Midwifery and Health Visiting services) will continue to be delivered from either a Children's Centre Hub or Spoke
North Locality			
Kensington Avenue	Winterbourne PIP House	Norbury Manor Thornton Heath	
Central Locality			
Selhurst	Crosfield (Malling Close) Shirley Aerodrome	Tunstall Woodside Canterbury Road Peppermint	
South Locality			
Woodlands	New Addington Purley Oaks Byron	Castle Hill	

3.3.4 Impact of the new proposals

- Reducing the budget for service delivery to fund costs for the additional Children's Centre Spokes, to give greater access to services for local families
- De-designate 6 of the current Children's Centres but retain them as Children's Centre spokes continuing to deliver services under the leadership of the main hub
- Introduce a new site in the North East Locality (PIP House) improving access for residents
- Retain pre-existing 2YO provision ensuring links with Children's Centre Locality Hubs to promote Best Start services to families
- Recognise Purley Oaks as a Spoke serving families in the South of the borough.
- Continue to work across the Best Start partnership and VCS to optimise services to identify and meet the needs of the locality
- Within the new model, services will be delivered from 11 different sites, the three Children's Centre Hubs and 8 Spokes under the leadership of a locality Hub.

3.3.5 The picture below illustrates how Children's Centres work in partnership:

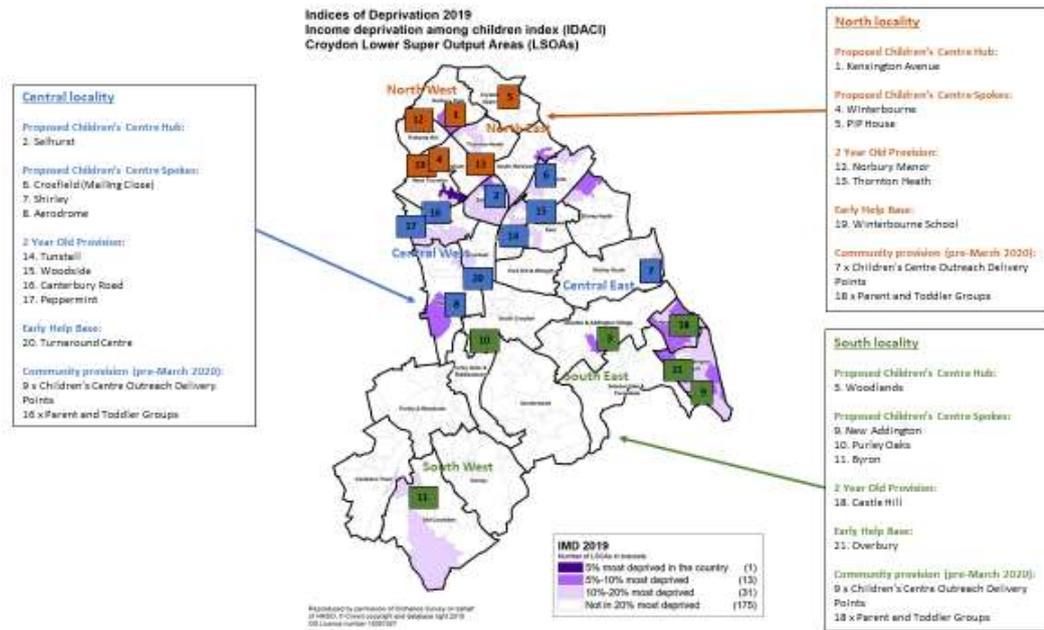
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The services work across the Best Start partnership delivering the Best Start programme and with midwifery and health visiting services to enable families to access health services more easily.

- 3.3.6 Links with the Early Years community will be maintained, and partnership working improved and optimised to offer families the full range of Best Start services.
- 3.3.7 Each Children's Centre Hub will deliver a full programme and also manage services from each Spoke.
- 3.3.8 An Outreach programme run in partnership with the voluntary and community sector will ensure families who choose not to access Children's Centres, still have access to support. A rotation of Parenting Aspirations and Parenting Skills services will maximise accessibility across the locality, for example Baby and Us or group support for parents with children who have social communication difficulties. Midwifery and Health Visiting services will continue to be based in the areas with the greatest need.
- 3.3.9 We will work with Schools to identify alternative use of the building when not used as a Children's Centre Spoke, for services to improve outcomes for children and families, in accordance with the criteria as set out in the Sure Start Capital Grant. These sites will no longer be designated as Children's Centres, however may still provide related services that benefit children and the local community.
- 3.3.10 The proposed model provides opportunities for Children's Centre providers to develop partnership working with community and voluntary sector partners. By developing sustainable partnerships across the borough it is possible to develop a vibrant and thriving offer for families, sharing resources and venues as well as developing outreach. The picture below illustrates a community of provision for early years:

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3.3.11 The agreed Procurement Strategy will seek to strengthen and enhance partnerships and improve integrated working across the Partnership Early Help Network to improve outcomes for children and reduce inequalities.

3.4 Proposed Procurement Route

3.4.1 Options considered:

a) **Direct Award all Contracts – Rejected**

This option would not meet the requirements of the Council's Tender and Contracts Regulations (TCR) or Public Contract Regulations to procure the best value Contracts available in the market.

b) **Open adapted procedure for all Contracts – Rejected**

This option was considered suitable for most Contracts with the exception of Parent Infant Attachment services.

The Parent Infant Partnership delivers therapeutic and key worker support to secure good parent infant attachment for new born babies, parents, carers and babies up to 24 months. This service is delivered as a partnership between Croydon Council (employing staff) and Croydon Drop In (commissioned to provide operational management and clinical supervision).

c) **Agree to Direct Award for Parent Infant Attachment services – Recommended**

This option will ensure the continuation of the partnership arrangement between Croydon Council and the current incumbent provider to deliver operational management and clinical supervision for the Parent Infant

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Partnership service. For this reason, as per the proposals in this report, CCB approved the waiver of TCR Regulation 11.2.1 to run a mini competition for Parent Infant Attachment services.

The Parent Infant Partnership is a specialist service to young babies and their parents during the first 1000 critical days. Croydon Drop In hold the relevant qualifications for this specialism, ensuring the integrity and evidence base for this intervention.

A full review of the current delivery model for this service needs to be undertaken to inform the best procurement route for new Contracts. There will be a direct award report for this service for a term of 2 years plus 4 months. This report will be taken to the Contracts and Commissioning Board in August for approval.

d) **Open adapted procedure for Best Start Child Development and School Readiness services and Parent Aspirations and Parenting Skills services – Recommended**

This option is considered suitable as these services fall within the scope of “social and other specific services set out within Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). Consequently the so-called ‘Light Touch Regime’ will apply to this procurement.

3.4.2 For this procurement, the Council will utilise the flexibility available by virtue of the Light Touch Regime and will be using an adapted open procedure to procure new services. The Contract value over the aggregated lifetime of the Contract is above the PCR 2015 threshold for Light Touch services (currently £663,540) and a Find a Tender Service (FTS) Contract Notice will be posted. The opportunity will be advertised on the London Tenders Portal, Contracts Finder and the Council’s website.

3.4.3 1 Contract would be offered, split into 2 lots as per below with individual service specifications:

Lot 1 - Child Development and School Readiness services (£1,162,533)
(3 Sub-Lots, 1 Sub Lot for each locality [North, Central and South])

Tenderers will be able to bid in for 1, 2 or 3 Sub-lots

Lot 2 – Parent Aspirations and Parenting Skills services (£269,000)
(6 Sub-Lots for each service within the offer)

Tenderers will be able to bid in for 1 or more Sub-lots

3.4.4 The rationale for 1 Contract split into Sub-lots is considered as the most efficient route to further develop partnership working and transform delivering services in a more integrated way. Joint partnership key performance indicators will hold Best Start commissioned partners to greater accountability in meeting its statutory duty for these services.

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- 3.4.5 This approach will provide a mechanism for contract managing partnership working with interdependent key performance indicators across the commissioned contracts for Best Start services. A locality community of practice approach will facilitate the development, effective partnership working, identification of local needs and joint locality service planning.
- 3.4.6 The current model of individual Agreements and Contracts do not provide a mechanism to effectively challenge where partnerships are ineffective and do not achieve the best outcomes for children and families. Ineffectual partnerships hinder services from being responsive leading to inconsistencies and inequity of provision.
- 3.4.7 The recommendation in this report for the new service model, if approved by Cabinet, the procurement process for the new services will commence on 31st August 2021. The new Contracts for the services will start on 1st December 2021.

3.5 Contract Terms and Conditions

- 3.5.1 The initial term for the Contracts will be for a period of 2 years and 4 months from 1st December 2021 up to March 2024. Contracts for new services will be in line with approved budgets and the MTFS savings programme.
- 3.5.2 All Contracts will be based on Croydon standard terms and conditions and will be reviewed by legal prior to publication.
- 3.5.3 The Contract value split into Sub-lots with individual providers are of relative low value and usually held with local charities and social enterprise companies who depend on payment in advance to cover operational costs. Tenders will have the option to join the Premier Supplier Programme where an early payment levy will mitigate paying invoices in advance.
- 3.5.6 The integrated outcomes framework and refreshed evaluation approach incorporates Best Start Community of Practice meetings held each term, to facilitate effective partnership working, service planning and delivery across the locality. This approach will ultimately improve Contract performance and give best value to the public purse.

3.6 Procurement Timeline

- 3.6.1 Recommissioning Best Start services has been delayed due to the consultation on the Croydon Renewal Plan, approval of Council budgets and Pre-election Period relating to the Mayoral and local elections. The statutory duty to consult in the event of any significant change to inform Cabinet decisions could not take place until after the elections. With insufficient time to meet procurement deadlines and avoid a gap in service provision Cabinet approved the proposals to extend contracts for a further period of up to 4 months (to 31st December 2021).

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Due to the potential impact on the budget available for the new services and in order to meet the commencement date of 1st December 2021, the procurement timeline is very tight.

3.7 Evaluation

3.7.1 Tender Evaluation

3.7.2 To ensure new Contracts deliver services efficiently, within the available funding envelope and in support of the Council's New Ways of Working, the Chair of CCB has approved the waiver from Regulation 22.4 Standard Evaluation criteria split to Price 50% and Quality 50% to be applied to the evaluation criteria. The rationale for this recommendation is to ensure the Tender evaluation achieves the best value for residents without compromising quality.

3.7.3 The Best Start Contracts have an established record of delivering tangible Social Value outcomes, therefore Cabinet is asked to note a waiver from Regulation 22.5 Social Value criteria from a minimum of 10% to a maximum of 5% has been agreed, redistributing the remaining available scores for sufficient focus on the Service Plan and Covid recovery.

3.7.4 Best Start delivers a high return of social value through its contracts for residents. Examples of volunteering opportunities, successfully attracting external funding and maximising the benefit for Best Start families or through offering staff training for council employees and community groups on digital skills and digital safety.

3.7.5 The Evaluation panel will include members across Health services, Commissioning, Education and Children's Social Care. Members from service user groups will represent parents, carers and the voice of the child.

3.7.6 Compliance with the Council's mandatory requirements and minimum quality standards will be specified in the eligibility and Tenders will be evaluated using a 4 stage process:

Stage 1: Supplier Suitability – Economic and financial standing, GDPR, technical and professional ability, modern slavery, London Living Wage and additional questions.

Stage 2: Method Statements (50%)

- Service Delivery – 10%
- Service Plan – 10%
- Business Continuity – 5%
- Workforce – 5%
- Safeguarding – 5%
- Quality Assurance – 5%
- Social Value – 5%
- PSP – 5%

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Tenderers are required to secure a minimum average score of 3 on the method statement criteria and a minimum score of 3 for both safeguarding and service delivery.

Stage 3: Price (50%): Completed Pricing Matrices

Stage 4: The Council will reserve the right to undertake site visits and/or invite Tenderers to attend clarification meetings with the Evaluation panel if required.

3.7.7 Financial evaluation

The financial assessment of prospective suppliers will be conducted to determine their financial viability and stability to deliver the service in line with the budget allocated.

This will be assessed as part of the overall economic and financial standing of Tenderers by a methodology set out by the Finance Service.

3.8 Procurement Timeline

- 3.8.1 In order to meet the commencement date for the new services (1st December 2021), there may be a requirement to request a Leader's delegation to approve the award of Contracts to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Financial Governance

Indicative Date	Activity
Stages 1 - 3	
31 st August 2021	Tender opportunity is available on the London Tenders Portal.
19 th September 2021	Closing date for initial tenders
21 st to 28 th September 2021	Evaluation of Tenders and Moderation
Stage 4:	
September 2021 to October 2021	Internal approval of proposed successful bids
October 2021	Internal approvals and processes for contract award
November 2021	Mobilisation and implementation
1 st December 2021	Anticipated contract start date

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3.9 Risks

Risk	Impact	Mitigation	Rating
<p>Gap in service at the end of the current contract term if these proposals are not approved</p>	<p>Council will be exposed to significant risk of challenge due to lack of provision for families, particularly those most in need, leading to political fallout and complaints. In addition, staff eligible to TUPE rights following procurement for new services.</p>	<p>The agreed Procurement Strategy would mitigate these risks and allow for a smooth transfer of service over to the new contractors.</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p>Risk of lack of suitable bidders responding to the Invitation to Tender</p>	<p>Lack of provision in corresponding locality reach area, leading to disjointed delivery and inequality for families in scope to receiving help and support.</p> <p>Additional provider negotiation required to agree a feasible delivery model covering the borough.</p> <p>Staff may need to be TUPE'd into the council to continue delivering service, and then TUPE'd</p>	<p>To be clear of the Council's vision for Best Start we have undertaken a public consultation to set out the proposed delivery model, available budget and areas with the most need.</p> <p>If after procurement, all areas of need are not covered by commissioned providers, the Council would need to consider the option to deliver these services directly.</p>	<p>Medium</p>

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	back out to a new provider when awarded.		
Risk of delay in awarding new contracts by 1 st December 2021	The full contract extension period will need to be utilised, impacting on the available budget for procuring new services.	There may be a requirement to seek a recommendation from the Leader of the Cabinet to delegate the decision to approve the contract award to the Lead Member of Children, Young People and Learning in consultation with the Nominated Cabinet Member for Finance.	Medium
Risk to re-procurement budget if extension up to 31 st December 2021 is fully utilised	<p>If the full extension is needed, the remaining budget would be insufficient to tender for full service provision.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a risk to the service achieving FY21/22 savings should additional budget for new services be required.</p>	There may be a requirement to seek a recommendation from the Leader of the Cabinet to delegate the decision to approve the contract award to the Lead Member of Children, Young People and Learning in consultation with the Nominated Cabinet Member for Finance.	Medium

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<p>Risk that the 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes Children's Centre model is unaffordable for the Market</p>	<p>Gap in service as alternative solutions are explored.</p> <p>Additional pressure on the budget if current contracts need to be extended further</p>	<p>The new service model has been informed by residents who were concerned about Children's Centres being accessible to the local community.</p> <p>Residents recognise savings need to be made therefore keeping services local to meet the needs of children and families has been prioritised.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Pressure on commissioning budget due to financial year overlap and required savings.</p>	<p>Unable to deliver to the proposed model due to further budget restraints.</p> <p>Financial or employment liabilities will need to be considered, agreed and mitigated if the service is to achieve its MTFS savings in FY21/22.</p>	<p>To look to additional funding sources for one off additional budget for 2021/22</p>	<p>Medium</p>

3.10 Performance Monitoring

3.10.1 The Best Start integrated outcomes framework supported by a refreshed performance dashboard, will measure whether outcomes are being achieved and the impact on children and families. New national indicators resulting from the Best Start for Life policy paper will be included once these

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have been published. Partnership key performance indicators will be introduced.

3.10.2 Robust Contract monitoring will continue at regular intervals along with quality assurance visits to ensure quality of provision and practice. A new Best Start Locality Partnership self-evaluation process will be implemented and will contribute to the improvement agenda for Council and Early Help Partnership Board.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 In May 2021 the Council held a consultation with residents to inform the proposal to redesign Children's Centres into a 3 Hubs and 6 Spokes locality model.

4.2 There were significant concerns about accessibility, reduction to services and in particular proposals to cease funding services from Purley Oaks and Shirley Children's Centres.

4.3 As a result of further consideration of the proposals following consultation the Council recommends including Purley Oaks Children's Centre and Shirley Children's Centre as 2 additional Spokes, identifying Purley Oaks in the South locality (see table below):

Locality	Children's Centre Hub	Children's Centre Spoke	Area covered
North	Kensington Avenue	Winterbourne	North West
		PIP House	North East
Central	Selhurst	Malling Close	Central East
		Shirley	Central East
		Aerodrome	Central West
South	Woodlands	New Addington	South East
		Byron	South West
		Purley Oaks	South West

4.4 The consultation was primarily online due to the current restrictions and social distancing measures. A web based survey was created on the council's website and paper copies and accompanying information were available through a dedicated phone number.

Information regarding the consultation was shared through

- Ward Councillors
- Children's Centre Leads and Universal Services Coordinators
- The Croydon Council website, Social Media and Your Croydon
- Croydon Best Start Facebook Page
- Children's centre websites, social media pages and posters within the centres

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- Croydon Council intranet and internal bulletins
- Partner agencies
 - Health Visiting, School Nursing, Family Nurse Partnership, Midwifery.
 - Speech and Language teams
 - Croydon Best Start delivery partners
 - CCG and Croydon GP network
 - BME Forum
 - Asian Resource Network
 - CVA
 - Early help and social care teams

- 4.5 An Equalities Analysis was undertaken and identified that mothers who may have recently given birth or who have young children or with a disability, would be more impacted by the proposals to reduce the number of Children's Centre buildings. Retaining Purley Oaks and Shirley Children's Centres as Spokes in the new proposed service model, will enable greater access to purpose built, child and family friendly buildings to access provision.
- 4.6 At the mid-point of the consultation, it was agreed to extend the consultation deadline by a week to allow more time for residents to participate.
- 4.7 A summary of demographics for respondents to the consultation is shown in the tables below:

Respondents by Gender

Gender	Responses	%age
No information	641	47.0%
Any other gender	2	0.1%
Female (including male-to-female transgender women)	632	46.3%
Male (including female-to-male transgender men)	46	3.4%
Non-binary (for example, androgenous people)	3	0.2%
Prefer not to say	41	3.0%
Grand Total	1365	100.0%

Respondents by Age

Age	Responses	%age
Under 18	1	0.1%
18-30	81	5.9%
31-40	469	34.4%
41-50	115	8.4%
51-60	28	2.1%
61-70	11	0.8%
71+	7	0.5%
Prefer not to say	30	2.2%
No information	623	45.6%

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Grand Total	1365	100.0%
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Respondents by Disability

Disability	Responses	%age
No information	601	44.0%
No	636	46.6%
Prefer not to say	43	3.2%
Yes, limited a little	55	4.0%
Yes, limited a lot	30	2.2%
Grand Total	1365	100.0%

Respondents by sexuality

Sexuality	Responses	%age
No information	640	46.9%
Bi-Sexual	22	1.6%
Gay/Lesbian	5	0.4%
Heterosexual/Straight	644	47.2%
Prefer not to say	54	4.0%
Grand Total	1365	100.0%

Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Responses	%age
White	534	39.1%
Any other White background	64	4.7%
White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	450	33.0%
White Irish	20	1.5%
Black	46	3.4%
Any other Black background	6	0.4%
Black African	20	1.5%
Black Caribbean	20	1.5%
Asian	52	3.8%
Any other Asian background	17	1.2%
Bangladeshi	6	0.4%
Indian	23	1.7%
Pakistani	6	0.4%
Mixed	56	4.1%
Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	17	1.2%
White and Asian	11	0.8%
White and Black African	3	0.2%
White and Black Caribbean	25	1.8%
Other	11	0.8%
Arab	1	0.1%
Chinese	6	0.4%
Other	4	0.3%

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No Information	666	48.8%
<NULL>	618	45.3%
Prefer not to say	48	3.5%
Grand Total	1365	100.0%

5 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to consult where there is to be a significant change to Children's Centres. The views of residents have been taken into account and a new service model is proposed, retaining both Purley Oaks and Shirley as Children's Centre Spokes.

6 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Croydon Best Start fulfils the statutory duty on local authorities to provide early childhood services, with the Best Start services funded from the General fund. The proposed procurement strategy is expected to cost the Council £1.432m per annum and for the remaining 4 months for 2021/22 this will be pro-rata, with a full budget available for the 2 years 2022/24.
- 6.2 The budget for Best Start services has been reduced as part of the Croydon Renewal Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings programme (CFESAV09). A budget of £1,432m has been approved by Council for Contracts for new services.

The following table presents the revenue consequences on the available budget to fund these proposals. There is no Capital spend associated with this paper.

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6.3 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

	Current year	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) - 3 year forecast	
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Budget available	1,529	1,529	1,529
Expenditure	1,288		
Income			
Effect of decision from report			
Expenditure	477	1,432	1,432
Income			
Remaining budget	<u>(236)</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>97</u>

6.4 The effect of the decision

The above table presents the financial implications to be considered in line with these proposals which show the remaining budget for this financial year and subsequent years. The service has identified substitute savings to mitigate the financial risk in full from other budget streams for a one-off alternative savings for this financial year.

There could be a further increase in costs for this financial year if we do not commence the new Contracts on 1st December 2021. This will be due to the existing Contracts that will need to remain in place until 31st December (end of Contract term).

6.5 Risks

Due to costs to fund the current contractual commitments and this new commitment this will create a risk to the deliverability of the agreed MTFS savings programme by reducing the 2021/22 budget available to fund a revised delivery model from either December 2021 or January 2022.

This risk only materialises in the 2021/22 financial year if there is a delay to the implementation of the new model and the full year effect of the proposed savings (£660k) will be realised from 2022/23 as that model will be operational prior to the commencement of the next financial year. The quantified risk to the delivery of the current savings is approximately £220k if we do not commence new Contracts on the 1st December and £127k if

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we do, based on the estimated monthly operational cost of the proposed delivery model.

A risk assessment for the service is included at paragraph 3.9, above.

6.6 Options

Other options considered are included in section 13, below.

6.7 Future savings/efficiencies

Despite operating in a financially challenging climate, service improvement, efficiency and the delivery of good outcomes for children and their families remain at the heart of the Best Start contracts for services.

Robust contract monitoring will continue, identifying further efficiencies where possible.

If additional savings are required from this budget, this would have such an impact on contract spend and allocation to providers, that this would likely render this procurement unviable. If that was to happen, we would need to develop an alternative model of delivery.

Approved by: Kate Bingham (Interim) Head of Finance - Children, Families and Education)

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The authority to approve the Procurement Strategy in this report which has a value below £5million has been delegated to the Chair of the Contracts and Commissioning Board, pursuant to Regulation 11.3.1 of the Council's Tenders and Contracts Regulations.

7.2 The Council is taking due regard to the consultation undertaken in redesigning the delivery model for the Croydon Best Start programme and as required by Section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006.

7.3 The Council will consult with the Department of Education regarding the de-designation process with due cognisance of its statutory duty under the Childcare Act and the Sure Start children's centre statutory guidance.

Approved by: Nigel Channer, Head of Commercial and Property Law on behalf of Doutimi Aseh, Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

8.1 This report makes recommendations involving a service provision change which is likely to invoke the effects of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) 2006 Legislation (amended 2014). Where the activities of the new service are "fundamentally not the same", TUPE may

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not apply, as provided for by the 2014 amendments to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) 2006 Legislation.

- 8.2 The application of TUPE would be determined by the incumbent and any new service provider, for which the Council is the client in most cases. However, the Council also employs some of the Children Centre staff directly. On that basis, the Council will work with incumbent and any new service providers to help facilitate the TUPE transfer process, and ensure that due process is followed in relation to Council staff.
- 8.3 Where TUPE applies, the affected staffing group would transfer to the new service provider on their existing terms and conditions of employment. The appropriate TUPE protocols must be followed; particularly the duty to consult with the recognised trade unions and affected staff. HR advice should therefore be sought throughout this process.

Approved by: Debbie Calliste, Head of HR, Children, Families and Education on behalf of the Director of Human Resources

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 A new Equalities Analysis (currently in draft) has been completed to reflect the feedback from the consultation and ascertain the potential impact on groups that share protected characteristics.
- 9.2 The proposed service redesign will meet the Council's obligations in ensuring equity of access to provision, particularly for those with protected characteristics. The approved Procurement Strategy will ensure families with children under five can access the services and support they need, reduce inequalities and improve their life chances.
- 9.3 Equalities is a standing item and part of the contract management process. Regular monitoring allows for the early identification of any potential adverse impact on groups that share protected characteristics, enabling opportunities to intervene and avoid any unlawful action and improve outcomes.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 10.1 It is considered that there are no increased or decreased negative environmental sustainability impacts, from the proposals contained in this report.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 11.1 Supporting families through these services contributes to building resilience and community connections, with the intention to avoid people becoming

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involved in crime and disorder. Best Start services and partners work together to support children and families exposed to sexual violence and domestic abuse.

- 11.2 It is considered that there are no increased impacts on children and families in these proposals.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 12.1 The budget for Best Start Children's Centres has reduced and services will need to be delivered differently to meet the available funding for services.

- 12.2 The proposed 3 Hubs and 8 Spokes model enables statutory services for the children and families of Croydon; 1 in North locality, 1 in Central locality and 1 in South locality, each delivering a full programme of services. Each will also coordinate a reduced programme of activities from other buildings, in partnership with Best Start providers to ensure coverage of the locality.

13. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

13.1 Other options considered

Consideration was given to other models but later discounted for the following reasons:

- **Option A:** 3 Hubs delivering a full service with 6 Spokes delivering reduced services. This model proposed the ceasing of services at Purley Oaks and Shirley Children's Centres – **Rejected**

Resident feedback through the consultation on this proposal has been taken into account therefore this proposal has been rejected.

Accessibility and ease of transport links were key concerns for parents and carers who rely on Children's Centre services and support. The impact on families with young children from this proposal would be compounded further by proposals to close other community resources, i.e., Libraries and Purley Leisure Centre.

- **Option B:** Retain one hub centre delivering a full service with six spokes delivering reduced services – **Rejected**

This option may result in families not having access to local services and support when they need it. Children's centre services work closely with other services in the localities including the local early years settings, local community and voluntary sector partners, early help, health visiting and midwifery services. This model would not be able to achieve this.

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Children's centres need to be visible and welcoming in their local area to enable families to take up and engage with services. We know from the consultation on the Croydon Renewal Plan how highly valued children's centre provision is by families with young children and of the concern of losing valuable support and resources. Availability of children's centres would be reduced to a level where families who are facing difficulties may find it difficult to access support, through capacity of the service and the distance from their home.

- **Option C:** Retain three hubs and stop services from six designated Children's Centres – **Rejected**

As with option A, this model would not provide enough access to services to meet the needs of Croydon families. It would result in people having to travel too far from home for services therefore increasing the risk of them not using the services.

- **Option D:** Retain the current model of nine designated children's centres with a full service delivery – **Rejected**

Due to the council's financial position it is not financially possible to continue the current model with the reduced budget.

14. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

YES

14.2 HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

YES

The Director of Social Care and Education Law comments that a DPIA has been completed and currently under review with legal. The outcome of the DPIA will be included in the Tender documents.

Approved by: Louise Edwards, Information Management on behalf of the Director of Social Care and Education Law

CONTACT OFFICER: Sharon Hemley, Early Help Commissioning Manager
Sharon.hemley@croydon.gov.uk

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

- Appendix A – Best Start Children's Centre Consultation documents
- Appendix B – Presentation to the BME Forum

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- Appendix C – Equalities Analysis

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Best Start for Life, The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report, 2021
- Best beginnings in the early years: Technical report one, July 2020
- Best beginnings in the early years: A proposal for a new early years guarantee to give all children in England the best start in life, July 2020
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, March 2021