

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
27 August 2015

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	ECAS 59/15

Family Centres Update

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report outlines the proposed model for family centre provision across Highland, to complement existing services and support families, and to enhance childcare facilities where required. It describes in outline, plans for developments in some locations.

1. Background

- 1.1 The local and national policy agenda is clear - that every child should be given the best possible start in life.
- 1.2 It is recognised that there are a range of family support interventions that can make a significant impact on child and family health and wellbeing within universal and targeted services. These will have a lasting impact into older childhood, adolescence and adulthood, in terms of both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Key to this, is the quality of nurture and care that children receive from their parents/carers.
- 1.3 By being supported in their role as parents and encouraged to feel more connected within their communities, families can increase their confidence and skills, and work towards developing their own capacity and resources. Such support can help reduce the need for future support from services, and therefore represents best value for money.
- 1.4 In Highland we provide a range of services and early interventions designed to improve the outcomes for children and their families, delivered in-house or in partnership with third sector colleagues.
- 1.5 Most parents want the best for their children and manage to provide the love and care that they need, often helped by family and friends. Many parents struggle at some points in family life, and may benefit from additional informal or formal support. Some parents face obstacles which make it difficult for them to enable their children to grow up healthy, happy and able to realise their full potential.
- 1.6 The importance of supporting parents is recognised in Highland's Parents Support Framework (www.forhighlandchildren.org/4-icspublication/index_132_3013325563.pdf) , which sets out four key principles for supporting parents:
 - All children have the right to grow up in an environment that enables them to have happy, positive childhoods and to develop to their full potential.
 - Parents have the most important role in bringing up their children and are their prime educators.

- Parents are entitled to:
 - be empowered to look after their children to the best of their ability
 - be treated as active contributors to the development of services
 - be offered accessible information and advice
 - be able to access appropriate additional support services
 - to be helped by practitioners who work to an appropriate standard and are suitably trained and supported
- Wide engagement of individuals and organisations, both within communities and across agencies, is recognised as a vital element of a strong, sustainable support structure for families.

1.7 There is a need to further develop our services to ensure they are built with and around our families and their communities, and this in line with Highland's Council's developing approach to community empowerment. Scotland's former Chief Medical Officer, Sir Harry Burns highlighted the benefits of using 'assets model' approaches which can '...accentuate positive capability within individuals and support them to identify problems and activate their own solutions to problems which they themselves identify. They focus on promoting health generating resources that promote the self-esteem and coping abilities of individuals and communities, eventually leading to less dependency on professional services.

1.8 To ensure there is adequate and sufficient accommodation to carry out this work, there is a need in some areas to form Family Centres in local premises.

2. Family Centres

2.1 Family Centres are community based resources which provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment, to deliver local support to children and families which is both flexible and responsive.

2.2 Family Centres enable a range of supports to be delivered locally in one building including for example: child health services; early learning and childcare provision; parenting support through 'stay and play' sessions; baby massage; weaning sessions; PEEP/Solihull groups; intensive family support programmes such as Incredible Years; benefits advice; and a base for contact visits. The key aim of such support is to build parental confidence and to improve children's wellbeing.

2.3 Due to Highland's geographical diversity, it is envisaged that the model of family centre will vary across the authority. To enable appropriate services to be in place, District Managers along with their Family Teams are formulating District Children's Service plans which will:

- Map current provision
- Identify gaps and duplication
- Set priorities for development that will ensure a range of universal and additional support is in place.
- Establish adequate workforce to offer interventions and to monitor delivery

2.4 In the more urban areas of concentrated population, there is a need to have buildings near or within areas of deprivation. In more remote and rural areas, the challenge is to provide provision more creatively, for example through partnerships and collaboration with the third sector and private sector, sharing existing resources and offering 'virtual' family centre provision with an emphasis on outreach work.

3. Planning to date

3.1 All four operational areas in Highland are in discussion or negotiation around the formulation of family centres in their area.

3.2 North Area

3.2.1 Staff in Caithness are currently planning two Family Centres, in the East and West of the District.

3.2.2 In Wick, Family Centre provision is being built into the new office accommodation due to open in mid-October. The family centre will occupy the ground floor of the building; it incorporates clinic space for health visitors, early years practitioners, speech and language therapists and others. There is a fully fitted kitchen, a living room for family work and a messy play area. There is also a quiet space for children.

3.2.3 A third sector organisation is also currently providing a range of services in Pulteneytown. This organisation provides full early learning and child care, wrap around care and a range of supports for adults and families such as welfare advice and housing support.

3.2.4 In Thurso, plans have been developed for a family centre on a smaller scale, which is due to open in 2-4 weeks. The building is a demountable within the grounds of Miller Academy and is easily accessed without going through the schools playground. It is also close to the nursery provision within the school. This building will offer clinic space as described above which can also be used as family space. There will be a sink and some kitchen provision and can also be used for family contact. There will be a hot desk space for staff. This centre will work closely with third sector provision in the area to avoid unnecessary duplication.

3.2.5 In Sutherland, there is a need for somewhere to provide child friendly contact space, in addition to family work. The level of need would not justify a building solely for this purpose. Possible partnerships are being considered with local third sector providers who may be seeking to expand, and the shared use of buildings is being explored. CALA have recently had their accommodation in Brora upgraded, and there is a real potential for this service to be utilised, particularly around early learning and childcare delivery to two year olds.

3.3 West Area

3.3.1 In Lochaber, there is an opportunity to develop a family centre in conjunction with the plans to relocate the Family Team currently based in Fulton House to Camaghael Hostel. Initial steps have been taken towards this, and a feasibility study is being undertaken. Discussions have taken place with potential partners in the third sector and there is local enthusiasm for this project to be developed.

3.3.2 In Skye and Lochalsh, a centralised family centre model would not be practical. A “virtual” model, based on existing provision where services could rotate using current buildings and further developing partnerships. is being progressed.

3.3.3 In other parts of the area, such as Gairloch, Ullapool and Kinlochleven,

partnerships are being explored and developed with the third sector to provide family centre provision. Where there are plans to replace existing schools and nurseries, there will be opportunities to collaborate in the design of new educational resources to include Family Centres.

3.4 Mid Area

- 3.4.1 In Dingwall, discussions are taking place with the Fire Service with a view to developing a shared resource around the Fire Station. The Fire Service have advised they would consider offering the Council a long term (25 year) lease in return from benefitting from the modernisation of the building for their own use. The initiative is currently at the feasibility stage.
- 3.4.2 In the Alness/Invergordon areas, new school developments are being considered, which will provide opportunities for the provision of a family centres. In Invergordon, two plans are being considered: a new 3-18 school campus or a new primary school which will replace two smaller primary schools. It is intended to incorporate a Family Centre into the design of this educational provision. In the interim a temporary property will be sought to be developed as a Family Centre. This temporary provision will complement the “Janny’s House” situated within the grounds of Alness Academy, which opened in June 2015. The Alness provision is a shared resource between education and the East Ross Family Team and is being used for group work, parenting programmes and to support contact between looked after children and their families.
- 3.4.3 In Tain, discussions are continuing with Property Services to identify a suitable property. A meeting with the Fire Service Manager is scheduled, to explore the possibility of using a small local Fire Station. Also, in the Seaboard villages, a variety of services and groups are already delivered from the Merkatt Centre. This works well and would complement any local authority run provision.

3.5 South Area

- 3.5.1 There is an existing Family Centre in the Merkinch area of Inverness, which has operated for nine years, but where there is potential for further development to build on an inclusive approach to family support across this area. Funding is being pursued to provide enhanced facilities for the Merkinch community and a wide range of family support services. This will be discussed further with local members and the community.
- 3.5.2 In the Dalneigh area, plans are being drawn up to extend the existing Family Resource Centre to accommodate Inverness West Family team staff as well as providing capacity for family centre activity for the Dalneigh, Charleston and Muirtown communities.
- 3.5.3 Priority is being given in the first instance to the Inverness West area. However, there is a commitment to identifying suitable accommodation in both the Hilton and Smithton/Culloden areas where family centre provision is identified as a real need. There have been a number of discussions around possible options, but there have been no suitable building/sites identified that might be progressed at this stage given the significant pressure on accommodation in the South area.

4. Implications

- 4.1 **Resources:** There is capital funding for childcare for workless households, of £4.942m over the next three years. In addition, there is £2.059m over 10 years for children's services investment. Specific proposals will be brought back for committee approval as plans for projects are finalised. There are no identified revenue implications, the proposals being based on an assumption that existing staff resources will be utilised.
- 4.2 **Equalities:** The enhancement of early years and family support services is a key national and local initiative to address health and social inequalities throughout life
- 4.3 **Gaelic:** Every effort will be made to provide support to families through the medium of Gaelic
- 4.4 **Rural:** Due to the lower concentration of children and families in rural areas, a flexible approach to service delivery will be adopted. Rural areas will not be disadvantaged in terms of service delivery if there is no family centre building within their community
- 4.5. There are no **Legal, Risk** or **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** Implications

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Committee is asked to note and comment on the progress to date in relation to the setting up of locally based family centre provision.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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