

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

EXECUTIVE

20 June 2023

Closure of Designated Children's Centres

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide a summary of the consultation response on the closure of five designated Children's Centres.
- Nidderdale Children's Centre
 - Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre
 - South Craven Children's Centre
 - Nidderdale Children's centre
 - Wensleydale Children's Centre
- 1.2 To seek approval to de-register and close the five identified designated Children's Centres.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Statutory guidance from the Department for Education states that any building currently registered as a designated Children's Centres will need to be de-registered with the DfE following the Sure Start Children's Centre Statutory guidance. The guidance recommends consultation with stakeholders prior to any change.
[Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114111/sure_start_childrens_centres_statutory_guidance.pdf)
- 2.2 Approval to consult on the de-registration and closure of five designated Children's Centres was previously granted approval by the executive member for Children's Services Councillor Janet Sanderson and Stuart Carlton, Director of Children's Service on 7 March 2023. Details of the five identified centres are featured in the main body of the report, section 4.
- Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre
 - Eastfield Children's Centre
 - South Craven Children's Centre
 - Nidderdale Children's centre
 - Wensleydale Children's Centre
- 2.3 The online consultation commenced on 27 March 2023 and closed on 21 April 2023.
- 2.4 This report does not require the Executive to determine the future use of the building as this is an Officer level decision in accordance with the Property Procedure Rules - The purpose of this report is to seek approval to de-register and close the five identified designated Children's Centres

3.0 RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation responses only related to two of the five Children's Centres. There were no responses received in relation to Kirkbymoorside, Eastfield or Wensleydale Children's Centres.
- 3.2 In total there were 16 responses to the consultation. The majority of responses (13) supporting the proposal. One response related to Nidderdale Children's Centre and 15 responses were made in response were in relation to South Craven Children's Centre. A summary of the consultation responses is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The one response to Nidderdale Children's Centre did not support the proposal with the respondent citing lack of resources within the locality, requesting that the centre be retained for the development of groups to support children and their families. As evidenced in the report to exec member dated 7 March 2023 there was very little use of the building therefore it would not be financially viable to reopen this building. Within the Nidderdale locality there are currently several groups that provide support for children and their families. These include baby and toddler groups, a play group delivered within community venue, parent and baby swimming sessions and a Rhyme time group being delivered in the library.
- 3.4 The two responses that did not support the proposal for South Craven did not object to the de-registration of the Children's Centre, but opposed the future use of the building, however there were 13 responses of support for the proposed future use. Discussions are currently ongoing with the school and playgroup regarding future use of the building.

4.0 CHILDRENS CENTRES INVOLVED IN THE CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The following section outlines details of the identified Children's Centres.

Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre

- DfE Designated Children's Centre
- £0 Sure Start funding therefore no potential funding clawback
- Potential annual saving of £10,800

- 4.2 From March 2020, Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre was unused at the point of the lockdown, due to the covid-19 pandemic. The building is situated in the grounds of Kirkbymoorside community primary school. Prior to lockdown in March 2020, there was limited use of the building, with only two weekly sessions.

- 4.3 There are two other buildings where service delivery takes place in Ryedale; Norton Children's Centre, and Atmosphere in Pickering, both which remained open during the pandemic. Following a refurbishment of Atmosphere in April 2022, the intention is to transfer the Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre property to the primary school to increase the capacity for early years provision. Should a venue be required in Kirkbymoorside for sessional delivery by the Children and Families Service, there are a number of accessible community venues, including the library, where these could take place.

Eastfield Children's Centre

- DfE Designated Children's Centre
- £0 Sure Start funding therefore no potential funding clawback
- Potential annual revenue saving of £49,800

- 4.4 Eastfield Children's Centre was previously used to deliver 'Family Time' and a small number of one-to-one activities. The building is leased from Sanctuary Housing, with the

lease expiring in September 2022. A private day nursery runs from part of the leased accommodation. However, NYCC have been unable to sublet the accommodation to generate income. The private nursery opened up discussions with Sanctuary Housing to lease directly from the organisation. Alternative accommodation is available at Ourspace, within five minutes of Eastfield Children's Centre. Although Ourspace was unused during the pandemic, a substantial refurbishment was undertaken prior to re-opening in September 2022 to enable delivery of 0-19 services within the building, alongside touch-down spaces for Children and Families staff. Ourspace generates an income from the Healthy Child team - delivered by Harrogate District Foundation Trust (HDFT) - and Compass who are co-located in the building.

South Craven Children's Centre (Glusburn)

- DfE Designated Children's Centre
- Sure Start Funding £676,431
- Opened April 2011 with a potential 25-year clawback up to 2036
- Potential annual revenue saving of £12,600 with potential estimated annual rental income of £6,000

4.5 The South Craven Children's Centre building was predominately used by Harrogate District Foundation Trust for office accommodation for Healthy Child Practitioners. This building was unused during the pandemic and has not re-opened. There has only been occasional use for Family Time and this offer has subsequently transferred to Skipton and North Craven Children's Centres and is working well. Negotiations with a private early year's provider are currently underway and costs are being agreed with a view to leasing the premises to the Private Day Nursery securing a potential estimated rental income of £6,000.

4.6 Although there was Sure Start funding of £676,431 invested in the building, as the property will continue to deliver Early Years provision through the private provider, it is not anticipated there will be any clawback.

Nidderdale Children's Centre (Pateley Bridge)

- DfE Designated Children's Centre
- Sure Start funding of £590,715
- Opened September 2010 with a potential 25-year clawback period up to 2035
- Revenue costs of the property are estimated at £13,400

4.7 Previously used on an occasional basis for service delivery, the Nidderdale Children's Centre building was unused during the pandemic and has not re-opened. There has not previously been any partner use of the building which connected to the school. There are discussions about possible release of the space back to St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School, with an agreement that the premises would be used for direct work with children attending the school.

4.8 Although there was Sure Start funding of £590,715 invested in the building, as the transfer to the school will continue to provide Early Years provision, it is not anticipated there will be any clawback.

Wensleydale Children's Centre (Askrigg)

- DfE Designated Children's Centre
- Sure Start funding of £50,000
- Opened c.2009 with a potential 25-year clawback period up to 2034
- Potential annual saving of £14,800

- 4.9 The building at Wensleydale Children's Centre (Askrigg) has only had occasional use, was unused during the covid-19 pandemic and has not subsequently re-opened. Service delivery has moved to Colburn and Carnagill Children's Centres. This building is leased to NYC and the proposal will be to give three months' notice on the lease to the landlord (Yorebridge Educational Foundation).
- 4.10 Although there was Sure Start funding of £50,000 invested in the property, it is anticipated that as the Early Help service will continue to deliver support to children 0-5 years and their families in the locality, then it is expected that the DfE will not request this clawback funding.

5.0 OTHER PROPERTY ISSUES

- 5.1 Other buildings which have historically been used by the Children and Families service, but which have been unused during and following the pandemic are also considered for disposal. As non-designated Children's Centres, these are simply property transactions and are not subject to a statutory requirement to consult but are included in section 4 & 5 of this report for completeness.

5.2 Flaxley Road (Brown Cabin)

- Not a designated Children's centre.
- Annual saving achieved £57,900

The building was handed back for school use in 2022.

The building was previously used as Multi agency office accommodation and a small delivery space. CAMHS vacated the premises to alternative accommodation in September 2021 and HDFT identified alternative office accommodation as part of their own rationalisation review. The Children and Families Early Help team have been accommodated within workspaces in Sandpiper House alongside colleagues from CSC enabling greater integration across the service.

5.3 Bedale Youth Shack

- Not a designated Children's Centre.
- Annual saving achieved £16,200

This building is currently mothballed being closed since March 2020. Prior to this the use of the building was used for weekly Youthability evening sessions, fortnightly Healthy Child Clinics, and some Family Time. The proposal is to release the building to the school with an agreement that there would be use of the premises on occasions for direct work with children attending the school. NY Youth will also maintain a separate agreement with the school for use of the premises on an evening to deliver Youth ability groups.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposal to de-register and change the use of the five children's centres outlined in section 4.1 will achieve an estimated annual revenue saving of £101,400 alongside a possible additional rental income of £6,000. Further actions in respect of other unused properties will achieve a further £74,100. In total, savings of £181,500 may be achieved by realising the proposals.

6.2 Table 1 outlines the potential saving:

Table 1: Financial implications of proposal to de-designate children's centres

Building	Designated Children's Centre	Potential annual revenue costs (£)	Income implications (£)	Total potential annual revenue saving (£)	Potential Clawback (£)
Kirkbymoorside Children's Centre	Yes	10,800	0	10,800	0
Eastfield CC	Yes	49,800	0	49,800	0
South Craven CC Glusburn	Yes	12,600	Estimated income 6,000	18,600	676,431
Wensleydale CC (Askrigg)	Yes	14,800	0	14,800	50,000
Nidderdale Children's Centre	Yes	13,400	0	13,400	590,715
Flaxley road – Brown Cabin	No	65,900	(8,000)	57,900	0
Bedale Youth Shack	No	16,200	0	16,200	0
Total Proposed Savings				181,500	-
Total Potential Funding Clawback				-	1,317,146

5.3 The proposed savings will contribute to a corporate property savings target.

5.4 A number of Children's Centres received Sure Start funding as a capital investment. As part of this process the DfE could request financial clawback on the Sure Start Capital funding to a maximum total of £1,317,146 if the buildings are no longer used for the delivery of Early Years provision.

5.5 Following the outcome of the consultation exercise, any sites which require a disposal will be dealt with under the required process as outlined in the Property Procedure Rules

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is a duty to consult on any changes to Designated Children's Centres. Statutory guidance from the Department for Education means that recipients must have regard to it when carrying out duties relating to children's centres under the Childcare Act 2006. Any building currently registered as a designated children's centres will need to be de-registered with the DfE following the de-registration guidance.

[Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 6.2 The guidance recommends consultation with stakeholders prior to any change. Although all of the centres included in this report have been closed since the start of the covid-19 pandemic and have not re-opened subsequently, there remains a need to follow the statutory guidance. The consultation explained how the local authority will continue to meet the needs of families with children under five as part of any reorganisation of services.
- 6.3 Statutory guidance also places a duty to Local Authorities to ensure there are sufficient children's centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need. This includes a responsibility to ensure services are within reasonable reach of all families with young children in both urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport. The report explains the alternate provision available for those centres that are proposed for closure.

7.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

- 7.1 There are no identified detrimental impacts on other services or organisations.

8.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a potential risk (assessed as low) that the Department for Education may request a funding clawback on Sure Start capital investment equating to a maximum amount of £1,317,146.
- 8.2 As the transfer of these properties will continue to provide Early Years provision, it is not anticipated there will be any clawback.
- 8.3 Between 2014 and 2016, NYCC de-designated and closed 13 Children's Centres with a total Sure Start capital investment of £3,643,140. NYCC was not requested to pay back any of the Sure Start capital funding.

9.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no identified Human Resource implications.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Over the last two years, during and following the pandemic, Early Help redesigned the delivery of activities to support children and their families moving to a blended approach of virtual and face to face activities. This has enabled the delivery of countywide virtual activities which families can access from their home, reducing the need for the same number of buildings. This has removed any impact on protected characteristics as the model has created greater access to the service
- 10.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken prior to consultation and is attached as Appendix 2.

11.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The proposal identifies an overall long-term positive impact on carbon reduction through reductions to the workplace property portfolio. The size of the workplace estate means that it is an important factor in the Council's overall carbon reduction plan, as a result when sites are vacated/ disposed of there is a positive impact as the overarching carbon footprint in relation to the workplace property portfolio will be reduced. Across the seven sites that are being considered as part of this proposal it is difficult to provide an exact figure around the potential carbon saving – as we do not hold the consumption data for all of the sites due

to the Children Centres being located on school sites with a flat charge contribution paid towards energy consumption. As a result, a review has been undertaken to try to determine the possible estimated saving with this being from 16,274kg with a potential up to 22,157kg.

- 11.2 A Climate Change Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3.

12.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 The buildings proposed for de-registration were not used during the pandemic due to low frequency of use and have not re-opened.
- 12.2 The one response to Nidderdale Children's Centre did not support the proposal with the respondent citing lack of resources within the locality. As evidenced in this report, this building has been closed since March 2020, and there are currently several groups in the locality providing support for children and their families.
- 12.3 The two responses that did not support the proposal for South Craven did not object to the de-registration of the Children's Centre but to the future use of the building.
- 12.4 Closing the five named Children's Centres in section 2 of this report and subsequent change of will yield annual revenue savings in the order of £181,500 (including potential estimated revenue income of £6,000).
- 12.5 There will be potential carbon savings between 16,247kg up to a potential 22,157kg

13.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 13.1 The Executive are asked to approve de-registration and closure of the five named centres.

Stuart Carlton
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COUNTY HALL
NORTHALLERTON
26th May 2023

Report Author – Barbara Merrygold
Presenter of report – Stuart Carlton

Background Documents:

[childrens centre consultation.pdf \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](#)

[The de-commissioning and closure \(transfer of use\) of five designated Children's Centres within North Yorkshire | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation Responses
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 – Climate Change Impact Assessment

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.