



Mayor and Cabinet

Permission to extend contracts for Lewisham Children and Family Centres

Date: 14th September 2022

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Borough-wide

Contributors: Emily Newell, CYP Joint Commissioner

Outline and recommendations

This report seeks permission to extend three contracts for the provision of Children and Family Centres, for one year from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, to allow time to remodel services in line with the new Lewisham Family Hub model. The report seeks approval for a waiver of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to enable commissioners to extend these contracts.

The total value of the one-year contract extensions is £1,670,000, consisting of £1.3m for the contract with Early Years Alliance, £200,000 for the contract with Donderry School, and £170,000 for the contract with Kelvin Grove and Eliot Bank School.

New government policy requires the Council to establish Family Hubs in Lewisham in 2023, and be fully in operation across the borough by 2025. As core providers and venues of Family Hub services, the emerging vision for Family Hubs will have a significant influence on how the new Children and Family Centre offer is designed. As this vision is still in development, more time is needed to design an offer that is fit for purpose. The extension period would allow time for a full review and remodelling of Children and Family Centres to take place.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

3rd February 2021: Mayor and Cabinet agree savings of £325,000 to Children and Family Centre contracts

November 2021: Government policy on Family Hubs announced

April 2022: Lewisham selected as local authority area to receive Start for Life funding

July 2022: Recommendation to extend contracts informally agreed with CYP DMT

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from Mayor and Cabinet to extend three contracts for Children and Family Centres for one year, from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, to allow time to remodel services in line with the new Lewisham Family Hub model. The total value of the extension requested is £1,670,000.
- 1.2 The current contracts have been in operation since April 2017, following a competitive tender process where Donderry School were awarded a contract covering Downham ward; Kelvin Grove and Eliot Bank School (KGEB) were awarded a contract covering Forest Hill and Sydenham wards; and Pre-School Learning Alliance (now Early Years Alliance) in partnership with Clyde Early Childhood Centre, Beecroft Gardens and Marvel Lane Schools were awarded a contract covering the rest of the borough.
- 1.3 The contracts provide a range of support services for children aged 0-11 and their families, though focused on children aged 0-5. This includes 1:1 support for families, targeted programmes to address specific needs, and universal open-access programmes. The overall aims of these contracts are to improve parenting and attachment, improve school readiness, improve child and family health and life chances, prevent escalation of need, and offer practice housing, employment and finance support.
- 1.4 The Council's Early Help and Prevention Strategy introduced plans to remodel Children and Family Centres as part of the move towards establishing a model of Family Hubs across the borough. Central government have since announced a requirement for all local authority areas to have established Family Hubs by 2024. During the extension period outlined in this report, commissioners will redesign these services to ensure alignment to this model and ability to adapt to the Council's vision for Family Hubs in Lewisham as it emerges over the next 2-3 years.
- 1.5 This rationale for extending the contracts are as follows:
 - As core providers and venues of Family Hub services, the emerging vision for Family Hubs will have a significant influence on how the new Children and Family Centre offer is designed. It is not possible to design a new service yet because the Family Hub Model is still in development. The extension period would allow time for a full review and remodelling process to take place.
 - In October 2022 LBL expect to receive significant funding (approximately £3.8m)

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up to March 2025) as part of the government's 'Start for Life Programme'. This will require rapid mobilisation of initiatives for children aged 0-5 and their families. This will require significant co-operation of Children and Family Centres, who already deliver relevant support which can be expanded and developed to meet funding requirements, and who also manage the key community buildings in which these initiatives are likely to be hosted. The Council will need to maintain the stability and foundation of the current Children and Family Centre contracts in order to achieve this.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet authorise an extension of one-year to three contracts providing Children and Family Centre services, from the 1st April 2023 to the 31st March 2024 at a total value of £1,670,000.

- Extension of the contract with Early Years Alliance (previously known as Pre School Learning Alliance) at a cost of £1.3m
- Extension of the contract with Dowlerry School at a cost of £200,000.
- Extension of the contract with Eliot Bank and Kelvin Grove at a cost of £170,000.

3. Policy context

3.1 The provision of Children and Family Centres contributes to the Council's Corporate Strategy, specifically the priority to 'Give children and young people the best start in life'. It also supports the delivery of the Council's Children and Young People's Plan (2019-22), which establishes how we will continue to work to improve outcomes for our children and young people so that:

- Children and young people have the best start in life and are protected from harm
- Children and young people have good physical and emotional health
- Children and young people develop, achieve and are ready for adulthood
- Children and young people feel listened to and respected

3.2 In 2020 the Council agreed a new Early Help and Prevention Strategy, which establishes how the Council will work with partner agencies to provide support to children, young people and their families at an early point to prevent the escalation of need. It set out a series of improvement plans across seven priority areas; Information, Advice and Support, Targeted Early Help and Family Support, Family Hubs and Children and Family Centres, Targeted Youth Services, Health, Edge of Care, and Contextual Safeguarding. The Children and Family Centres play an active role in the delivery of support to families across each of these priority areas. As a universal and preventative offer to all families, with enhanced support based on identified or indicated need, Children and Family Centres are a vital part of the local Early Help offer.

3.3 The Council's Early Help and Prevention Strategy introduced plans to remodel Children and Family Centres as part of the move towards establishing a model of Family Hubs across the borough, and to 'seek to further integrate our pathways and provision of

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support between Maternity, Health Visiting, Children and Family Centre Services and Early Years providers’.

- 3.4 The vision for Family Hubs is to create a system-wide model of integrated, high-quality, whole-family support services. Family Hubs will be open, accessible, physical and virtual single points of contact, that are welcoming to families, children and young people from pregnancy up to the age of 25. Family Hubs will host multi-agency support services that have been co-operatively designed and developed, and that operate across a shared culture and common language. Children and Family Centres are core partners in the Family Hub partnership, particularly as the initial focus of development will be on early years support (as per the Start for Life funding described below). The Children and Family Centre buildings themselves are likely to be used as locations for Family Hubs.
- 3.5 In 2021, new government policy was announced requiring local authority areas to have established Family Hubs by 2024. The new national Start for Life Programme has recently been established to drive forward this mobilisation within early years services, and Lewisham has been preselected, subject to application, as one of 75 local authorities to receive funding. The available budget and application process will be set out in summer 2022.

Statutory Duty

- 3.6 Legislation in relation to Children Centres is contained in The Childcare Act 2006, and underpinned by Sure Start Children’s Centres Statutory Guidance, which was last updated in 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sure-start-childrens-centres>
- 3.7 A Sure Start children’s centre is defined in the Act as a place or a group of places:
- Which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority’s area are made available in an integrated way;
 - Through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and,
 - At which activities for young children are provided.
- 3.8 The Statutory Guidance states that ‘children’s centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as about providing premises in particular geographical areas’.
- 3.9 A children’s centre should make available universal and targeted early childhood services either by providing the services at the centre itself or by providing advice and assistance to parents (mothers and fathers) and prospective parents in accessing services provided elsewhere.
- 3.10 The guidance defines the core purpose as being to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

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- Child development and school readiness;
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and,
- Child and family health and life chances.

3.11 Children Centres/Sure Start centres have not been inspected by Ofsted since 2015 with no recent update of this guidance.

4. Background and strategic context

4.1 In April 2017 Lewisham Council awarded contracts to three providers to deliver Lewisham's Children and Family Centres, following a competitive tender process. These contracts had a three-year initial term with the option to extend up to a further two years. This extension period was granted in November 2019. Due to the impact of Covid-19, Mayor and Cabinet agreed a further one-year extension to these contracts in December 2020, meaning that the current contract ends on 31st March 2023. There are no further options for extension included within the original contract terms.

Current service provision

4.2 Council records note that in 2010 there were 19 children centres operating in the borough. Commissioned Children's Centres formed part of a wider internal Early Intervention Service (EIS). The EIS was remodelled and reduced in 2016, and management of Children's Centres was taken on by the CYP Joint Commissioning Team.

4.3 The focus of the 2017 tender process for these contracts was to develop a consistent Children and Family Centre service offer across the borough an expectation of close working with partner early years agencies to develop a strong '0-5 pathway'. The tender specified the following key focus areas:

- **Improved parenting and attachment:** including by optimising the outcomes of the first 1001 days, and reducing toxic stress and the impact of factors leading to toxic stress.
- **Improved school readiness:** including support to reach key milestones and child development
- **Improved child and family health and life chances:** including child and maternal mental health and resilience & healthy weight
- **Prevention of escalation:** including support to children and their families to be safe and providing early help
- **Housing, Employment & Finance Support:** including support to mitigate impact of poor housing & employment support

4.4 As part of this tender process, Donderry School were awarded a contract covering Downham ward; Kelvin Grove and Eliot Bank School (KGEB) were awarded a contract covering Forest Hill and Sydenham wards; and Pre-School Learning Alliance (now Early Years Alliance) in partnership with Clyde Early Childhood Centre, Beecroft Gardens and Marvel Lane Schools were awarded a contract covering the rest of the borough.

4.5 The two school providers have use of their own school based buildings, whereas Early Years Alliance (EYA) initially operated within the five Council owned sites set out

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below:

- Bellingham Centre - 109 Randlesdown Road Bellingham Rd Belling SE6 3BT
- Evelyn Centre - 231 Grove Street, London SE8 3PZ
- Ladywell Early Childhood Centre - 30 Rushey Mead Ladywell SE13 7HT
- Hatcham Oak Centre* - 29 Wallbuton Road London SE4 2NX
- Honor Oak Old Depot* - St Norbert Road, London SE4 2EY

*these buildings are no longer used as CFC delivery sites

4.6 Delivery models and staffing structures have altered over the life of these contracts, owing to changes in internal Lewisham structures, savings requirements and Covid-19.

4.7 All three providers have adopted a singular 'Lewisham CFC' branding and share a set of core aims to:

- Build attachment and attunement between parent and child
- Help parents to understand how they can support and nurture healthy brain development
- Deliver parenting programmes to promote parental warmth and appropriate behaviour responses
- Build healthy relationships, resilience, physical health and mental health/wellbeing in families
- Prepare a child for school and for life
- Support parents to support their children
- Respond quickly and flexibly to identified needs
- Empower parents and support them to develop personal strengths and skills to deal with future problems
- Prevent more costly interventions later on in the child's life
- To be part of building community cohesion and support networks for families
- Be delivered face-to-face, digitally, and also in blended models to suit family needs and changing environmental circumstances (including any Covid restrictions)

4.8 The focus is whole family, however Children and Family Centres do provide support for children aged 0-11 years, with a particular focus on 0-5, and within that an emphasis on the First 1001 Days and the Five to Thrive approach.

4.9 Lewisham Children and Family Centres currently deliver against three core areas:

- **1:1 Support for Families** - To deal with any immediate practical needs and support families to access community and specialist services, to enable families to reflect on their challenges and support them in finding ways through them, to support families in navigating systems and services to meet their needs, to build resilience and empower families to cope with future challenges and to prevent escalation of need
- **Targeted programmes** – Evidence-based specialist programmes including in relation to Parenting support, feeding and nutrition, child development, toileting, mental health including CYP-IAPT, trauma informed domestic abuse interventions, jobs, skills, language and employment

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- **Universal programmes** – Open-access programmes with an aim of increasing engagement and providing information, support and guidance at the earliest stage. Examples of universal programmes include Outreach Team, Little Explorers sessions, Soft play, stay and play and Messy Play, Community food, clothing and toy bank, parent advice and information sessions, and digital services including blogs and online sessions

4.10 Since 2016, EYA have also been lead partner in the borough for delivering and improving outcomes for children affected by domestic abuse, with significant demonstrable outcomes. This includes maintenance and ownership of the Domestic Abuse Portal and delivery of innovative support programmes such as CODA under 4s. EYA also deliver IAPT interventions for children and young people, funded through a separate SEL ICB contract, that contribute to NHS data flow targets.

5. Rationale for extension

5.1 The recommendation is to extend the contracts for one-year with the three Children and Family Centre providers. The rationale for this option is described below.

Development of Family Hubs in Lewisham

5.2 New government policy, announced in November 2021, requires Lewisham Council to mobilise Family Hubs in the borough by April 2024. The move towards Family Hubs over the next 2-3 years will require system-wide co-ordination and reorganisation of early help and preventative services for children and families across this age range. As universal and open-access services Children and Family Centres are exceptionally well-placed to host services for children, young people and families.

5.3 The emerging vision for Family Hubs will have a significant influence on how the new Children and Family Centre offer is designed, and more time is needed to enable commissioners to design a service that is aligned to the developing Family Hub model. The current contract expiry dates would potentially lead to developing a service that may quickly not be fit for purpose as the Family Hub model emerges, and having more time to pilot and develop the Family Hubs approach would be beneficial before agreeing a new and lengthy contract, or planning for potential insourcing.

5.4 Children and Family Centres are core partners in the Family Hub partnership, particularly as the initial focus of development will be on early years support (as per the Start for Life funding described below). The Children and Family Centre buildings themselves are likely to be used as locations for Family Hubs.

Timetable of family hub development

Milestone	Time period
Engagement with key partners	May – August 2022

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Establishment of Family Hub governance, programme management, and key work streams	July 2022
Consultation and engagement with children, young people and families	August – October 2022
Start for Life programme begins	October 2022
Design of initial Family Hub model	October - December 2022
Pilot of Family Hub launched	January 2023
First Family Hub fully operational	April 2023

New Start for Life grant funding

- 5.6 In October 2022 LBL will receive significant funding as part of the government’s ‘Start for Life Programme’. This new funding aims to develop support in specific areas using a Family Hub model, for expectant and new parents with children up to five years old. This will require the Council to deliver a range of support for families of children aged 0-5 out of community ‘hubs’, which must be family-friendly non-clinical settings like Children and Family Centres.
- 5.7 The exact requirements and value of the funding is to be confirmed, but this is estimated to be around £3.8m. This funding covers 2.5 years with the grant period ending on 31st March 2025. The provision of such funding for local authorities is exceptional and unlikely to be repeated, it is vital that the Council makes best use of it.
- 5.8 Programme guidelines state that this funding should be allocated and initiatives mobilised within the 2022/23 financial year. This funding covers a range of services, not just those provided by Children and Family Centres. This programme will require significant co-operation of Children and Family Centre providers, who already deliver certain elements of the programme requirements which can be expanded and developed to meet funding requirements, and who also operate the key community buildings listed in section 4.6.
- 5.9 Based on information shared so far, as a minimum this will require us to establish in 2022/23:
- Parenting support including a) a universal programme available for all parents and b) peer support groups in the community.
 - Breastfeeding support services delivered face to face in community locations
 - Perinatal mental health services for parents of children aged 0-2 including training staff within hubs and offering peer support within community locations

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- Parent and Carer Panels consisting of parents with children aged under 2 years old, and hosted in community locations
- 5.10 Children and Family Centre buildings are the ideal venue for such services, and the contracts already deliver elements of this support which can be expanded and developed to meet funding requirements. They are ideally placed as entry points to this provision, as universal open-access services based in the community.
- 5.11 The Council will need to maintain the stability and foundation of the current Children and Family Centre contracts in order to mobilise these initiatives quickly. Running a tender process alongside this mobilisation will be destabilising at a time when we will require more co-operation from providers and use of the buildings they operate. This extension period will allow commissioners to mobilise and test initiatives with the current providers, whilst the new vision for the Children and Family Centre offer is developed.

Vision for the new Children and Family Centre offer

- 5.12 Though we have an overall vision for the future of Children and Family Centres, a detailed offer cannot be finalised until the vision for Family Hubs is more clearly established, and a full public consultation and needs assessment is completed.
- 5.13 However, based on existing experience of what works in Lewisham, known gaps in current services, and existing feedback from families and other professionals, commissioners have established some key priorities to be achieved through this re-design process:
- Reviewing potential duplication between targeted family support provided by CFCs and by Family Thrive
 - Establishing more concise and clear priorities for providers. Based on current evidence of need this would include:
 - Perinatal mental health
 - Obesity/healthy eating
 - Promoting key health messages (immunisations/vitamin d)
 - Speech, language and communication
 - School readiness
 - Domestic abuse
 - Work with fathers
 - Access to parenting advice/guidance (including breastfeeding/baby hubs/toilet training/boundary setting etc.)
 - Giving clearer requirements around evidence-based interventions for all CFC providers
 - As part of the Family Hub model, CFCs will be given a clearer focus on partnership working and will need to:
 - Help provide a seamless journey for children and families across the age range, working together with partners to support the whole family rather than working in silos

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- Be part of joint governance structures across early help and prevention services, including Family Thrive, health visiting, midwifery, primary care and youth services
- Adopt matrix management of locality-based multi-disciplinary teams, consisting of staff from across the above agencies
- Review current use of buildings and enable collaborative working between professionals
- Adopt shared training, induction and supervision processes
- Enable information sharing between agencies to identify need and provide timely support
- Jointly deliver interventions for families, such as structured group programmes, developmental reviews and drop-in clinics
- Adopt consistent branding, language and core messaging for families
- Improve digital access including expanding the provision of public health information online, providing a wider range of services via video calling and text messaging software.

Quality and performance of current providers

- 5.14 Commissioners are satisfied with the performance of the current providers, who have been proactive and flexible partners and have achieved real impact with children and families over the lifetime of these contracts.
- 5.15 The providers have a track record of successfully delivering savings whilst maintaining and developing services, including during the pandemic and with significant staff shortages. A total of £325,000 in savings (representing 16% of total value) were taken from these contracts in 2021, requiring significant review and restructure of services. Commissioners are clear that there is minimal opportunity for further savings without destabilising services.
- 5.16 The providers have demonstrated added value for local children and their families. Since 2016 EYA have been lead partner in the borough for delivering and improving outcomes for children affected by domestic abuse, with significant demonstrable outcomes. Delivery of domestic abuse programmes, and CYP-IAPT programmes (outlined in section 4.11), has relied on the core Children and Family Centre contract for management and administrative costs.
- 5.17 During the first Covid-19 lockdown, KGEB started and continue to host an award winning community store, responding to the needs of local residents. In 2021 they received a Lewisham Mayor's Award for exceptional contribution to the borough's Covid-19 response.

Affordability and value for money

- 5.18 The table below sets out the cumulative value of the contracts over the full contract period, including the requested extension. The value of the requested extension is equivalent to the current annual contract values, and falls within the overarching budget for these contracts (see point 6.1). As such, this extension is affordable and, as set out above, is driven by national policy.

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Contract period	PSLA / EYA	Downderry	Kelvin Grove and Eliot Bank	Total Annual CFC Contract
1 st April 2017 to 31 st March 2023	£9,070,000	£1,229,550	£980,809.17	£11,310,359
Extension period requested	£1,300,000	£200,000	£170,000	£1,670,000
Total contract value	£10,370,000	£1,429,550	£1,150,809	£12,980,359

5.19 The providers have a track record of successfully delivering savings whilst maintaining and developing services, including during the pandemic and with significant staff shortages. A total of £325,000 in savings (representing 16% of total value) were taken from these contracts in 2021, requiring significant review and restructure of services.

6. Financial implications

6.1 The total cost of the extension requested is £1,670,000 in the financial year 2023/24. The Children's Centres budget in the current financial year is £2,565,300. The overall budget also funds Children's Centres buildings, maintenance and IT.

6.2 The service are in the early stages of preparing draft savings proposals as a part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 and beyond. These proposals are not expected to impact on the funding of the proposed contract extensions.

7. Legal implications

7.1 The recommendation in the report is to extend three contracts for Children's Centre Services for a further year without carrying out a competitive process. The cost of each extension is set out in the financial implications. The report notes that the organisations has been providing this service since April 2017 on terms which will continue until April 2023. The proposal is to make a change to the contracts, by extending them for a further year.

7.2 The Council is obliged to comply with the procurement Regulations (Public Contracts Regulations 2015). Some variations to existing contracts may trigger a requirement to undertake a new competitive tender process. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules set out which variations can be made without a new competitive process (Constitution Part IV I, paragraph 17 of Contract Procedure Rules). This report explains why this extension to the contract for a further year is proposed.

7.3 Contract Procedure Rules say that where a contract variation is 'not substantial', the variation can be made (paragraph 17.5). The definition of 'substantial' takes into account matters including the nature and size of the proposed change relative to the original contract, and the likely market effect of the change (including the change to the scope and economic balance of the contract). There is a reasonable argument that the proposed extensions are not substantial. As such, the variations do not trigger a

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requirement to undertake a new procurement. On that basis, therefore, the proposed changes are allowable under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules paragraph 17.

7.4 The decision is a key decision and must be included in the key decision plan.

8. Equalities implications

8.1 A core purpose of these contracts is to reduce inequalities in outcomes for young children and their families in greatest need, including in the areas of children development, school readiness and parenting aspiration and skill.

8.2 In redesigning these services, commissioners will gather in-depth and cross-cutting data on uptake of services and needs of the 0-11 population and their families, including reviewing data on ethnicity, age, gender, location and a range of vulnerability factors across the population. This will be gathered from a range of sources, including published data and data from CFC and Early Help performance management systems. This exercise, in tandem with the data gathered from engagement with local service users, will provide us with the data we need to produce a full Equalities Impact Assessment of the proposed service redesign. This will form part of the wider engagement and needs assessment work taking place to design the Lewisham Family Hub model.

9. Crime and disorder implications

9.1 None

10. Health and wellbeing implications

10.1 A core aim of this provision is to improve child and family health and life chances, including improving child and maternal mental health and resilience, maintaining healthy weight, increasing access to health services and reducing health inequalities amongst children and young people and their families. Because of this the service should have direct positive implications for the health and wellbeing of local residents, and will be measured on its success in this area.

11. Social Value implications

11.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires that when the Council is procuring services above the EU threshold it must consider, before commencing a procurement process, how the procurement might improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area. It must also consider how the procurement might be conducted so as to secure that improvement. The matters to be considered must only be those relevant to the services to be procured; and it must be proportionate in all the circumstances to take those matters into account. These requirements are part of the Council's Constitution (Part IV.I Contract Procedure Rules).

11.2 The Council's Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice will be applied to this contract. This sets out various social, environmental and economic considerations to be applied. The purpose is to ensure that products and services are sourced and produced responsibly; to maximise resource and energy efficiency in the manufacturing and supply of goods and services in order to minimise environmental

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impacts; and to deliver outstanding value for money over the entire lifetime of the contract.

- 11.3 In addition, the service will ensure minimum pay rates in line with prevailing London Living Wage (LLW) or above where applicable.

12. Glossary



glossary
standard.pdf

13. Report author(s) and contact

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Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources

Mark Humphreys, Senior Accountant

Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR

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