
Family Hub Fees & Charges – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Family Hubs already have a schedule of fees and charges for the use of rooms with in the main buildings for each of the three Family Hubs. This was approved by council as part of the Communities Directorate fees and charges for the financial year 2018/19.
- 1.2 Work has been taking place to introduce further charges for activities and sessions which will provide income to support sustainability and as part of the planned savings for the Education Service in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 At the current time there is a system of voluntary contributions for activities and sessions provided by the Family Hubs. This approach was introduced following the restructuring of the service two years ago as a first step towards the introduction of charging.
- 2.2 Across the three hub areas there is variation in arrangements for the voluntary contributions, level of contribution and robustness of arrangements for the collection of the funds. This needs to be addressed so that there is a fair and consistent approach across the areas.
- 2.3 It is planned to introduce charging for activities with agreed charges which are consistent in all family hub areas.
- 2.4 Initially it is planned for there to be an introductory period to move from the voluntary contributions to fixed charges. The charges for individual activities will be allocated with in a range from £2:00 to £6:00.
- 2.5 There will also be a booking system where families can access the details of activities, book places and pay in advance. This system will be available on their phone, computer and within the Family Hubs at a dedicated booking point to ensure accessibility for all.
- 2.6 Following the initial six month period there will be a review of the system, activities, charges and impact. This will then feed into the fees and charges for the financial year 2019/20 to support agreed savings targets for the Education Service.

3. Options for Consideration

- 3.1 To delay the introduction of new charges for the Family Hub activities until the new financial year. This would impact upon the Family Hub savings target for 2019/20 and miss out on savings in 2018/19.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The charging for individual activities will be allocated within a range from £2 to £6 for single activities.
- 4.2 To further review the charges in the new financial year, providing a phased move from voluntary contributions.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The introduction of new charges for activities within the Family Hubs is an important part of the work to both support the planned savings programme for the Education Service but also to support the on-going sustainability of the Family Hubs.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 As part of the public consultation in 2016, “Shaping the future of children centre services in West Berkshire” there was a specific set of questions regarding the activities provided by the centres and the introduction of charging.
- 6.2 During the consultation there were 130 responses to the questions about universal activities and the proposal to look at and implement charges. Responses reflected the following views:
- We appreciate the savings that need to be made and if this keeps the centres open, however what contingency plans will there be for families who can't afford to pay.
 - Responses indicated that most were willing to pay; some would pay more if it meant that they were able to access a session. Others felt £3.50 was too high and that the charge should be £2.00, while others felt it should only be £1.00.
 - Other responses suggested that the charge should be lower, say £1.00, but per child.
 - There should be transparency about how the charges are collected and used.
 - This should be a voluntary contribution as a charge is a barrier. Should be lower than £3.50, £1.00 seems fair.
 - There should be no charge at all as a charge will create a barrier between those who have and have not.
 - Those who can afford to pay should pay.
 - £3.50 is a big increase and too much, £2.00 is a more reasonable figure per family.
 - There could be fund raising events cake sales, fairs and sales to help.
- 6.3 Since the consultation there have been regular opportunities for families to feedback on the Family Hubs via an annual survey and also through focus groups and direct engagement during planned activities and sessions.

Wards affected: All

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