

Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Decision on the future of Startpoint Sholing Childcare Nursery
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
Startpoint Sholing Childcare Nursery is a council run childcare nursery registered by Ofsted to care for up to 26 children. All current children will be transitioning to school in September 2024. The nursery employs 17.12 FTE staff, the majority are female and predominantly part time. The nursery occupies one classroom and associated staff areas within Startpoint Sholing Early Years Centre.	
Summary of Impact and Issues	
Since the nursery opened, it has continued to incur a financial deficit year on year and relied on SCC subsidies to break even. This deficit has continued to steadily increase year on year. A task and finish group was set up with colleagues from Finance and HR, Early Years and the Nursery Manager with input from Legal to address this. This resulted in several measures that were introduced which were successful in partly reducing the deficit. However, despite implementing successful changes, it has not been possible to identify a financially viable structure for the nursery that would enable them to break even. The Early Years funding that is provided by central government, does not cover the costs of sustaining this nursery without the need for significant on-going council subsidies of £350k from the Council to cover the ongoing operational deficit.	
Potential Positive Impacts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of the nursery would help to sustain neighbouring childcare provision, including a brand-new nursery development set to open in September within the local area. • The potential for redeployment of skilled staff to other areas of the council with staffing shortages would support further retention of skilled staff. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further efficiency savings may be possible by utilizing the classroom currently occupied by the nursery for other key statutory services, thus providing a further capital and revenue saving to the Council. 	
Responsible Service Manager	Darrin Hunter – Service Manager Early Years & Childcare
Date	8 th August 2024
Approved by Senior Manager	Robert Henderson – Executive Director, Wellbeing (Children & Learning)
Date	29 th August 2024

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	Closure of the nursery could have an impact on future children aged. (2-, 3- and 4-year-olds) who may wish to access their early years education entitlement at the centre.	There has already been a significant expansion of childcare places being provided within the local area, with plans in place for further expansions by private and voluntary childcare service providers over the coming months. These will ensure the sufficient availability of childcare places within the local area in response to the increasing demands from parents/carers who rely on childcare to enable them to work.
Disability	Nationally, there is a growing issue of some parents of children with SEND, struggling to find availability of childcare places.	Any parents struggling to find suitable childcare would be supported as part of the Council's Childcare Brokerage Service. This free service operated by the Council's Early Years and Childcare service acts to help support parents/carers in finding appropriate suitable

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		childcare for their children.
Gender Reassignment	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Care Experienced	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Race	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Religion or Belief	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Sex	The majority of employees who work within the nursery are female, working part-time, some have additional family caring responsibilities.	<p>Where appropriate alternative redeployment opportunities may be available across other service areas, where vacancies exist.</p> <p>Currently within the childcare sector nationally there is a significant shortage of staff. In June 2024 Southampton's childcare sector had 128 job vacancies at all levels across the city. The early years' service can help to facilitate and broker, new external employment opportunities for anyone</p>

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		wishing to continue to work within childcare.
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Community Safety	There is no evidence we are aware of, which negatively impacts on this area for consideration	N/A
Poverty	Childcare along with adult social care are considered to be the two of the lowest paid occupations. Many of those employed within these sectors are part time, many of which are also on universal credit.	<p>Due to the critical staffing shortages within the childcare sector, all affected staff would be supported by the early years' service to facilitate and broker, new external employment opportunities for anyone wishing to continue to work within childcare.</p> <p>Alternatively, all affected staff will be eligible for alternative redeployment opportunities within the Council, should they be available.</p>
Health & Wellbeing	Some members of staff currently employed within the nursery are being supported due to mental health or disability needs.	Ongoing support would continue alongside any redeployment opportunities. Failing that then employee assistance would be available as part of any redundancy considerations.
Other Significant Impacts	Statutory Childcare Sufficiency Duty - under the Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare Act 2016 all Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of good quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive childcare choices available in response to changes in parental demands for childcare.	The Early Years and Childcare Service has been working in collaboration with the sector to open 170 additional new early years childcare places by September 2024. With a further 220 new childcare places by September 2025 in response to the

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		changes in childcare entitlements.
Affected Nursery Premises	The loss of income from the nursery could add additional premises costs to remaining Startpoint Sholing services, if the nursery was closed.	There are a number of alternative key services that could relocate and utilize the nursery space thus mitigating such financial pressures as well as potential efficiency savings through the relocation of services.
Legal Consultations	There is a requirement for a 45-day staff consultation and consultation with stakeholders and the public on the proposed closure of a council service.	<p>The 45-day staff consultation process opens on 2nd September 2024 and closes on 16th October 2024.</p> <p>The consultation with stakeholders and public will commence from 2nd September for a period of 6 weeks and closes on 18th October 2024.</p>