
Meeting of the Children's Services Select Committee – 16th November 2023

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Family Hubs and Start for Life Information and Update Report.

Purpose of report

1. This report is to set out an overview of the development and recent progress of the Dudley Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. Within the report are steps taken to achieve a successful launch and how the service will be delivered across the Borough.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Members of the Select Committee note the content of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Information and Update Report.

Background

3. **Family Hubs and Start for Life Overview**

The Family Hub and Start for Life programme has transformed Dudley's Family Centre resource into 5 Family Hubs, place based in **Brierley Hill, Coseley, Dudley, Lye and Stourbridge**, with the commitment to the development of a spoke (Hub and Spoke model) for Halesowen, at Halesowen Leisure Centre.

Linked to this is the development of further spoke services across communities to form part of the Family Hub Network. The offer is a 0-19 service (0-25 where young people are care experienced or have SEND) and will support a range of integrated and co-delivered Early Help services with Health and Community based resources. Additionally, the Youth offer delivered by both Dudley Council and

voluntary sector partners will be included in the Hib model and so co-delivered as part of the whole family offer.

The Family Hubs programme sets out a vision for providing families with the integrated Early Help support as needed to care for their children from conception, throughout the early years and into the start of adulthood. This is to enable parents to establish a firm foundation for their children, from which to meet their full potential in life.

Developing the Hub network with key partners including Public Health and the DFE as added investment aimed at specific key focus areas:

- Parenting Support Parent and Infant Relationships.
- Perinatal Mental Health Support
- Language Development and the setting out a Home Learning Environment
- Infant feeding

In this work we are establishing Parent and Carer Panels and Publishing the Start for Life Offer. Also, in support of the development of 0-19 (25 if SEND) offer.

The Family Hubs Model has 3 principles:

- Access - a clear, simple point of access for help and support.
- Connection - Services, professionals & sectors working together and Relationships.
- Building on family strengths – Supportive Family work delivering sustainable change.

Hub Launch

The Dudley Family Hubs launched successfully in August 2023 and required the joining-up of local partners involved in the, early help, early years and family support system – including local authorities, NHS, voluntary, community, faith and charity sector partners – to plan and deliver services in a place-based way to meet all minimum expectations and some “go further” options.

Foundation for Developing Family Hubs

We have developed new Family Hub integrated teams to extend the reach of universal, early help and targets service being believers locally to or with the hubs setting.

Capacity across the whole system required enhancing to enable trained staff to deliver evidence-based programmes and to link work to key strategic objectives across the preventative partnership – set out in the key focus areas above.

Developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence of the workforce within the core Family Hubs teams and wider Family Hubs Network by developing a whole system “Consult, Coach and Co-work” model from specialists linked into the Family Hub Network was needed. Improving knowledge and relationships across the whole system but specifically community assets in order to help families self-navigate to support.

We have developed peer to peer and volunteer resources that add value across the programme and provide “Welcoming Face” and Family Hub Navigator support along with strand specific support.

Pooling budgets and joint commissioning ambitions are to be tested through the programme through commissioning a consortium approach to peer2peer and volunteering that sustains existing good practice, nurtures and scales-up and develops new provision across the 5 townships. This also builds greater sustainability in the model.

The Aims and Goals of the Programme

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme is a “test and learn” vehicle for a whole system move towards integration. Using “Family Experience” markers to inform, guide and evaluate the journey. Bringing relationship improvements between services and sectors and a workforce more able to work across professional boundaries.

An outcome of this work is increased community and workforce capacity and skills to identify and respond restoratively to support families to identify the support they need much earlier. Integrating services will create capacity for specialist services to offer “consult, coach and co-work” approach to support and reduce escalation.

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme will provide an opportunity to increase the reach of universal and early help to all families. This will be achieved through improved data sharing and seamless pathways – “less referrals and more introductions” and “persistent engagement” approach to outreach using motivational interviewing approaches.

Development of Family Hubs and the Start for Life Programme is an opportunity to co-locate services both permanently and transiently, thus improving access and service integration. However, as a short

term funded initiative, sustainable commitment and funding will be required beyond the grant term.

Specialist strands of service being delivered within the programme.

Infant Feeding: Dudley Borough has a reasonable breadth of infant feeding support on offer including antenatal infant feeding workshops, an infant feeding team with specialist midwives and community breastfeeding support workers, as well as a commissioned infant feeding peer support service.

However, there is a need to enhance capacity and focus on areas in greatest need. Whilst 22% of minimum requirements have already been achieved for infant feeding, a further 66% of minimum requirements are now close to being achieved in this work.

Identified areas for development include:

- Train and build infant feeding support competencies in the Family Hubs integrated teams, to include the ability to offer drop-in sessions.
- Establish infant feeding equipment loan schemes from each of the five Family Hubs.
- Increase out of hours capacity from the infant feeding team and increase specialist midwife time.
- Recruit more volunteers to expand infant feeding peer support sessions to all five Dudley townships and increase the diversity of these trained infant feeding peer supporters.
- Increase flexibility of peer support offer through moderated digital (chatroom) provision
- To offer interpreting services along-side this work.
- Strengthen infant feeding pathway continuity between midwifery and health visiting services and to build specialist infant feeding capacity to support infants (6+wks) still in need.

Parenting Support: Dudley has a well-regarded parenting support offer. However, this offer is more often targeted at families with greater needs or older children, via Early Help referral. Family Nurse Partnership is commissioned to support young parents. All health visiting staff are trained to Solihull Approach Foundation-level. There

is a rolling Five to Thrive training programme targeting First1001Days frontline workers.

Prior to COVID, midwifery offered parents a one-off Real Birth Company workshop antenatally focused mainly on preparing for delivery, and a parenting education session for grandparents. Postnatally, the health visiting service offered a homegrown 6 week course focused on healthy eating and exercise, the introduction of solids, play with your baby, baby massage and sleep. Neither of these offers have yet been reinstated due to staffing pressures.

In July, 88% of minimum requirements had either been met already or were in process.

Identified areas for development include:

- Delivering support with very early parenting challenges identified.
- Increase the proportion of parents accessing the current online antenatal and postnatal parenting education offer.
- To reinstate group / peer support education opportunities at times that suit parents best.
- Work to normalise parenting education in the antenatal period – using social marketing approaches - *as before COVID take up was reported to be greater amongst higher educated parents.*
- A need to introduce a greater range of evidence-based, face to face parenting education programmes including PPP and PPP for babies.
- Build up knowledge about local community assets that could support parents in F1001D, and as a response to the lack of time by core workers (midwives, health visitors and GPs) to map the current neighbourhood picture.
- Build up awareness of a whole-system multi-agency referral pathway for parenting support.

Early Language (EL) & Home Learning Environment (HLE): More work is required to advance early language and home learning environment maturity, as none of the minimum requirements have yet been met, although 66% are in process.

Identified areas for development include:

- Online EH & HLE information to be made accessible across various local websites, and the 'Black Country Early Outcomes Project website for early language development to be boosted in awareness and usage.
- To co-produce a digital platform of whole-system information and accessibility in relation to EL&HLE - parent and professionals delivered together.
- To review our evidence based HLE interventions and build these into the Integrated Early Years offer across the Family Hub Network (adopting proportionate universalism approaches)
- Designed and deliver the HLE programme pan Dudley Borough. There is a need to fill this gap by developing a whole-system HLE project with key messages across the LA.
- The above work needs to have build in a response to Speech, Language & Communication needs as part of the prevention and targeted response offer via the hubs and its partner services.

What's being achieved and next steps.

The Family Hub model places us in good position to move quickly, responding to emerging need with family hub practitioners delivering advice and support closer to the community. Families and young people will benefit from support and services that trusted where the environment feel safe and welcoming.

Additionally, each Hub is responding to key public health and prevention areas which are critical to ensure families remain healthy and resilient and also where children get the best start in life and are included in a shared community offer and educational experience.

Areas of development include:

- Legacy of Children Centres is replaced by the Hubs and any old stigma attached family centres. We have launched a refreshed Hub brand through communication strategy and engagement - including communities to build the Dudley Family Hub Network brand with satellite sites where families go.
- Legacy of Children Centre staff and functions in Dudley is minimal, so there will be building new Family Hub integrated teams and extending the reach of universal and early identification of need for all families and developing the outreach

model of “persistent engagement” approach using motivational interviewing techniques.

- Capacity across the whole system in being enhancing to enable trained staff to deliver evidence-based programmes.
- We are developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of the workforce within the core FH teams and wider FH Network by developing a whole system “Consult, Coach and Co-work” model from specialists linked into the Family Hub Network.
- We are Improving knowledge and relationships across the whole system but specifically community assets in order to help families self-navigate to support
- We are developing peer to peer and volunteer resources that add value across the programme and provide “Welcoming Face” and Family Hub Navigator support along with strand specific support.

Finance

4. Dudley’s total indicative allocation for the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme is between £3.71m and £3.87m over the three financial years as shown below.

The funding is allocated across the programme is as follows:

2023/23	2023/24		2024/25		Total	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
£387,000	£1,814,500	£1,804,500	£1,260,000	£1,335,000	£3,714,000	£3,879,000

Legal

5. This report has no direct legal implications for the Council.

Risk Management

6. There are no material risks to the Council’s Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report. However, it should be noted that there are risks in relation to the sustainability of this offer in the long term and to the early help and prevention goals in

delivering the Family Hubs; so as to prevent an escalation of high cost and long standing reliance's on statutory services.

Equality Impact

7. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

8. This report has no direct implications for human resources, organisational development or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

9. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment/Climate Change

10. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2041.

Council Priorities and Projects

11. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for Dudley to be the Borough of Opportunity in ensuring that:
- Children and young people benefit from the best possible start in life in our Child Friendly borough.
 - Those with special educational needs and disabilities and care leavers achieve the best possible outcomes
 - Everyone, including our most vulnerable, have the choice, support and control of the services they need to live independently



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