

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

DATE	21/09/2023
REPORT OF	Janice Spencer – Director of Children Services
SUBJECT	Family Hubs update
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Continued development of the family hub model will contribute to all outcome areas within the council plan but will make a specific contribution to ensuring children and families can access the right support at the right time in the right place. Early intervention is the key to supporting individuals to reach their full, potential as well as supporting them to improve their health and well-being. The Family Hub and Start for Life programme model actively encourages parents and carers to have their say and shape services and participate fully in their communities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an update on the services and support delivered from the Council's six current open Family Hub sites as well as presenting an outline of the new support that will be delivered as part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme. This includes the reopening of Immingham Family Hub as a seventh site. The report also updates on the transfer of five sites back to Academies.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report is being presented as an update on family hubs as requested by the panel.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The Council has undergone a realignment of its Children's Centre/ Family Hub estate as a result of being mandated by Elected Members of the Council's Cabinet on the 13th January 2021 to commence extensive consultation and engagement around the number of physical settings required for service delivery. This resulted in Scrutiny oversight receiving a report of the findings of the 2nd December 2021, leading to the retention of one (1) site earmarked for closure. The decision, taken by way of an Officer Decision Record (ODR), dated 5th May 2023 confirmed five (5) locations would remain closed with one (1) setting re-opening as well as investment in all of the retained seven (7) locations –

In addition to the above several developments are in progress that support delivery of systematic approach to early help in NEL.

Current Family Hub delivery

Our Locality Family Hubs continue to provide a range of services to families where complex needs have been identified via an early help or social care assessment. Interventions and intensive casework is aimed at improving outcomes for the whole family.

Approximately 600 early help episodes are open at any given time with the average length of intervention being around 4 months. Around 40% of this work supports Childrens Social Care through the delivery of interventions to statutory case work.

Specialisms have been developed within the service which include workers who are able to respond to needs where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour of children, children who need support in terms of early years, working with adolescence and children who have experienced domestic abuse. Working with children and families to reduce antisocial behaviour and offending is also a key area of practice. Parenting assessments and delivery of group work to parents and children are also central elements of delivery.

The Early Help Service is delivered both in families homes and from 6 Family Hub sites (East Marsh, Nunsthorpe and Bradly Park, Central, Queensway, Reynolds and West Marsh).

The work undertaken by family first practitioners within our locality hubs is constantly reviewed with the views and feedback from children and families being gained both during and on completion of interventions. Listening to children and families in this way helps with the revision and shaping of future delivery.

In addition to our internal Early Help offer, a range of teams and partners work from, or drop into these sites on a regular basis to ensure that expert support and advice is accessible to families. Midwifery, Health visiting, DWP, Young Carers, Family Group Conferencing and Family Time services are all full or part time residents within the Family Hub sites. This model of multi- agency working and co-location will be built upon by the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme

'Families that access the locality Family Hub Service benefit from good quality assessments which lead to focused plans that address needs and results in positive outcomes' (Ofsted inspection report 2021).

Family Hubs and Start for Life programme

In April 2022, North East Lincs was announced as one of 75 Local Authorities selected to be part of the governments Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. Since that time, we have worked with Central Government and local managers to submit a delivery plan to meet the requirements of the Programme.

The Programme is conducive to the Council's ambition to join up and enhance services delivered through transformed Family Hubs in our local authority, ensuring all parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it.

Through the Programme, parents and carers should feel supported and empowered in caring for and nurturing their babies and children, ensuring they receive the best start in life. This in turn will improve health and education outcomes for babies and children and enable them to thrive in later life.

The vision for the Programme is that:

Services will be :

More accessible – through a universal single point of access, a clear local family hub offer, recognised and understood by families, which includes hub buildings, virtual offers and outreach.

Better connected – family hubs harness the power of networks to drive progress on joining up professionals, services and providers (state, private, voluntary and community) through co-location, integration, partnerships, data sharing, shared outcomes and governance. Holistic, wraparound services will support families with a wide range of needs, identifying need early and consider the whole family. They reduce fragmentation, including between 0-5 services and those for families with older children and young people, and drive efficiency.

More relationship-centred – practice in our family hubs will focus on building trusting and supportive relationships, emphasising continuity of care in the Start for Life offer. It builds on families' strengths, drawing on and improving relationships, including building networks with peers to address underlying issues.

The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme places a focus on early years and early intervention delivered from family hubs by a range of partners and stakeholders. The programme comes with additional funding (£2.9 million) to transform current models of working, infrastructure, resources and sites during to period of the programme (Autumn 2022-March 2025) .

There are six main areas of practice and delivery that are funded by the Programme: Parenting Support, Perinatal Mental Health and Parent-Infant Relationships, Infant Feeding, Home Learning Environments, Parent-Carer Panels and Publishing a Start for Life Offer.

Further detail can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

An overview of what this could look like in North East Lincolnshire is described below.

1. Parenting support

NELC has embedded the Solihull Approach within our current Early Help Offer. Our goal is to extend the evidence-based parenting offer to families by:

- providing training and reflective practice opportunities to a wider range of professionals and practitioners across the Family Hub Network in order to increase the workforce who can deliver interventions that are effective
- building capacity within our communities, to encourage and facilitate peer-support networks
- increasing outreach to families who are isolated or find it hard to access the help they need

Our goal is also to see Hubs become places where parents feel welcome and able to ask for the information and help they need. Support groups will be in place for expectant and new families, families with children who have additional needs; foster carers; lone parents, teenage mums and dads.

The change and impact we want to see is that families not only feel that they have received the right parenting support at the right time and that it is easy to access, but that parents feel more confident and are able to help their child/children to

thrive.

2. Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships

Our goal is that every baby in North East Lincolnshire has a responsive and nurturing relationship with the adults around them in order to promote secure attachments, good mental health, brain development and positive lifelong outcomes. To work towards this we will understand the National evidence-base and work with partners to develop new services and pathways. These could include: universal information and groups, peer support, virtual and digital information and support, specialist programmes to support parent-infant relationships and more support for parents (including dads) with mild to moderate perinatal mental health needs.

We will also create a workforce development plan to upskill all practitioners and managers working with babies, children and families.

This will mean that we have a multi-agency workforce who can identify concerns and issues that may present themselves in respect to peri-natal mental health and parent-infant relationships early, and offer evidence-based support at the right time.

3. Infant Feeding

NELC have a Breast Feeding Peer Support service lead by Health Visiting team, where two groups are held in one family hub twice a week. In addition, the midwifery service also have an infant feeding service. We want to deliver to the whole workforce infant feeding awareness training aligned to the Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative, ensuring support and advice is consistent and evidence based. Our goal is also to expand the Peer Support Service so that there are support groups in each of our Hubs at least once per week. Antenatal infant feeding education will be offered to all expectant parents and their support networks. We will increase the virtual and digital information and support available, including out of hours support.

The change we want to see is that more families see breastfeeding as the norm, and more babies are breastfed, whilst those who formula feed are led by evidence to increase responsive feeding and skin-to-skin. We want families to have a positive infant feeding journey and celebrate their achievements, we want their experiences to be stigma free, and be able to access support and advice as early as possible.

4. Home Learning Environment

We plan to embed a model of support at universal and universal plus levels with dedicated early years practitioners. This model gives families and young children the opportunity to access a pathway of early years activities against the Early Years Foundation Stage criteria.

Trained practitioners will deliver evidence-based Home Learning Environment interventions directly to families in the Hubs and at home.

The planned activities may include PALS (Playing and Learning strategies), Child First, My baby and me, PAFT (Parents as first teachers) and 0-5 aspects of the Solihull Play Approach.

We will also build upon our Speech and Language and Communication pathway –

working alongside health practitioners and speech therapists. The change we would like to see is for an increase in children achieving the expected level or above across the EY Foundation Stage Profile.

5. Parent Carer Panels

The Programme requires authorities to develop Parent Carer panels to ensure that new parents are at the heart of service and system development. Parent and Carer Panels in NEL will be developed with an enhanced offer from a 'Voice and Influence practitioner'.

Parent champions will be encouraged and identified during extensive relationship building within the communities. Parent champions will have the opportunity of training which will be offered to extend their skills and knowledge for their own aspirations and to increase social capital.

6. Start for Life Offer

The Programme requires authorities to publish a Start for Life Offer.

The Start for Life Offer will be co-produced and embedded across health, education and social care.

We will also develop and deliver a strong communications plan that will use a variety of methods and platforms, including written materials.

We will build upon the Family Information Service and our LIVE WELL Strategy. The change we want to see is that families feel they can easily access information and guidance, that is evidence based and trusted. We want their experience to be easy access, easy to navigate, easy to understand and up to date.

Progress to Date

Good progress has been made to date and all expectations have been met in relation to the programme delivery and timescales. As part of the programme and delivery plan the council was asked to name which sites it would be using for Start for Life Activities. All seven of the retained Family Hub estate retained sites were named as delivery sites and work continues to progress with in line with programme requirements.

A transformation team (in line with guidance) has been formed and includes a programme manager, programme advisor, data engineer, project support and business support. This team of people are working closely together and all strands of the project are being progressed.

Working groups are in place for all strands of the programme supported by implementation plans. The groups focus on the development of evidence-based practice utilising defined funding for each strand.

A schedule of work has been put in place for each of the family hub sites in relation to redecoration, refurbishment and repairs. Capital Assets team have had meetings to formalise the work to be completed by December for East Marsh, Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park and Reynolds in the first instance, then the remaining sites being completed in 2024.

The Immingham site has been prioritised and has been refurbished throughout August. A stakeholder network event took place on the 21st August in relation to the reopening of Immingham and a formal launch has been planned for 23rd September 2023.

New universal support to new parents will be available from September 2023 on four sites (Immingham, Reynolds, Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park and East Marsh) with a plan to widen to all seven sites by December 2023.

As a start, each site will have 3 x play activities for children 0-5 per site, 1 x tea and toast drop in, and a parenting programme.

All will feature their own library of resources with a lending arrangement.

Virtual and on-line support, peer support and additional groups for families to attend are all in the planning stage.

Peer support and additional groups are in the process to being developed- awaiting workstreams and partnerships outcomes.

Progressing the transfer of sites

The transferring of the five children's centres/Family Hubs back to Academy schools has given opportunity to explore development of much needed local places for children with Special educational Needs Disabilities (SEND). This will prevent some children and young people having to be placed out of Borough, enabling them to be safely educated in their own communities, reducing transport costs and avoiding significant higher costs in the future (£58,289 is the estimated average cost per place out of area compared to £19,000 per place if commissioned locally with local Trust/school). Cabinet gave delegated approval in July 2023 for NELC to enter into agreements with Trusts as part of the development of Resource Specialist provision. This approach also supports NELC SEND sufficiency strategy place development, the work being undertaken via the Delivering Better Value project and NELC Education and Inclusion strategy.

Highgate (Thrunscoe), Broadway (Western Primary), Scartho (Fairfield), Riverside (Yarborough) and Strand are the five sites that have transferred or are in the process of transferring. There are possibilities to progress Resource specialist provision on three of the sites (Scartho, Strand and Riverside) with discussion being held or planned with each.

Each of the above Childrens centres/ Family hub sites are subject to communication with the DfE in relation to notification of change of use. A Family hubs realignment group made up of officers from across the council has been formed to ensure all aspects of transfer process are followed.

2.RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Not applicable as this is an update.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The approach to the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme aims to have a positive impact on reputation and communications across the Authority and partners. An action plan has been agreed with the Council's communications service, covering: statutory communications requirements, consultation requirements, information requirements and communication channels to be utilised

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Currently all spending plans in relation to the Family Hubs and Start for life project have been appropriately aligned to each strand of the project. Financial plans are subject to monitoring by central government and support from a regional advisor is being utilised to keep spend in line with expectations and on target in relation to timelines.

As part of the funding strands for the programme NEL were given £142,000 as capital which can be spent on improving sites, renewing branding and signage as well as purchase of equipment. The Council has further committed investment into each of the retained Family Hub premises as part of its agreed Corporate Backlog Maintenance programme and for the financial year 2023/24 has allocated £315,000 to ensure premises condition is maintained and improved to ensure full operational delivery.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable as this is an update.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable as this is an update.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Family hubs provide services to all residents and wards across the borough.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report and Decision Notice – 13 January 2021

<https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/4.-Family-Hub-Review-PDF-1373KB.pdf>

<https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Decision-Notice-13th-January-2021-PDF-133KB.pdf>

Scrutiny Report – 2 December 2021

<https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/3.-Family-Hubs-Review.pdf>

Officer Decision Record (ODR) – 5th May 2023

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2023/05/Officer-Decision-Notice-Key-Decision-Family-Hub-Realignment-REDACTED.pdf>

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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