
Report to Scrutiny Commission: Family Hubs and Start for Life programme

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny
Commission

Date of meeting: 29 August 2023

Lead director/officer: Tracie Rees

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Summary

- 1.1. Leicester City Council is making progress towards the Family Hubs model in line with the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).
- 1.2. Focus is being placed on developing an integrated network of support both online and at physical locations across Leicester in line with the programme's 178 minimum expectations.
- 1.3. To date progress has centred on building strong governance and shaping a robust delivery plan while also working to meet the initial key milestones set by the DfE, including the publication of a Start for Life offer and the establishment of a Parent Carer panel. Following on from soft launch events over the summer a full launch will be carried out in autumn 2023.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1. Note this report and accompanying presentation at scrutiny on 29 August for information.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1. There has been engagement with both the Parent Carer Panel that has been set up under the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and the well-established existing Early Help Parent and Young Champions to help shape plans for the roll out of the model and ensure that parents' and carers' voices are captured.

4. Background

- 4.1. Leicester City Council is one of 75 local authorities selected by DfE and DHSC as being eligible to receive a share of £300m funding through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. Through this programme the aim is to create a system where families with children aged 0 to 19 (or up to 25 with SEND) have a main point of access where they can source a range of help in one place at the right time.

5. Detailed report

- 5.1. Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

- 5.1.1. Based on deprivation levels and geographical representation, 75 local authorities have been selected by the DfE and DHSC to receive a share of funding to implement the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.
- 5.1.2. Leicester is one of five authorities in the East Midlands region that has been selected to receive the funding (alongside Derby City, Lincolnshire, North Northamptonshire and Nottingham). Locally, Leicestershire has received funding for Family Hubs through a second, smaller but less prescriptive transformation fund.
- 5.1.3. Though the programme aims to create a system where families with children aged 0 to 19 (or up to 25 with SEND) have a main point of access where they can source a range of help in one place at the right time, approximately 75% of the funding is dedicated to developing and delivering the 'Start for Life' offer which covers support from conception to a child's second birthday (otherwise known as the first 1001 critical days).
- 5.1.4. In addition to the core programme, there are a number of additional elements that have been added by central government, including:
- Family Hubs Digital Project
 - National Evaluation
 - Parent-infant relationship training offer
 - Workforce pilot bid

5.2. Family Hubs model

- 5.2.1. Family Hubs are intended to provide a central access point to enable families to access support and advice from an increased number of touchpoints across the city including:
- a number of main buildings explicitly named as Family Hubs, with co-located teams of specialist services
 - a network of other buildings already accessed by families (e.g. schools and settings, GP surgeries, libraries etc.), where families can receive services, support and up to date advice and signposting
 - virtual access points and a family hub website
- 5.2.2. Across the Family Hubs network families will be able to access information, guidance and support on:
- Antenatal and postnatal support
 - Feeding your baby and family
 - Child health and development
 - Speech, early learning and education
 - Attachment and healthy relationships
 - Special educational needs and disabilities
 - Parenting advice and support
 - Emotional wellbeing and mental health
 - Money and housing
 - Community groups in your area
- 5.2.3. Alongside the physical footprint of family hubs that is required, the guidance outlines a very clear virtual offer that is core to the successful delivery of the family

hub model. While having a role as a directory of information, providing details about the Start for Life offer and signposting to relevant services, this web platform is also expected to offer virtual elements of services. For example, this might include online training packages that are available 24/7 or online sessions which are streamed live.

5.3. Family Hubs programme conditions

- 5.3.1. The conditions that come with the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme mean that a set of 178 minimum expectations for provision need to be met. This includes expectations that we are required to meet through existing funding, for which we will not be receiving any additional money. Initial assessment indicates only about 25% of the total 178 minimum expectations for service delivery are already met under current arrangements.
- 5.3.2. To meet the requirements of the programme, by the end of June 2023 the local authority needed to demonstrate visible change in the provision of family hub services. To help evidence this visible change, five 'early adopters' launched the Family Hubs branding in May 2023 and phase one of the work to develop an online Family Hubs presence has completed. These early adopters have focused on building awareness of the Family Hubs brand as a concept rather than tying it to a specific geographical location. Therefore, this does not mean that the early adopters will necessarily be the permanent locations of the family hubs; decisions regarding this will be informed through a detailed needs assessment and engagement with families, young people and linked professionals.
- 5.3.3. All minimum expectations must be met in full by the end of March 2025, at which point the funding will cease and provision will need to be able to operate in a sustainable way.

5.4. Progress to date

- 5.4.1. Leicester's Family Hubs and Start for Life delivery plan was initially signed off 8 February but as a result of changing guidance from policy teams at DfE and DHSC this has gone through a number of cycles of amendments. The project delivery team is now working towards deadline of 25 August to have a final signed off version. Frustrations about this changing guidance have been raised with the Regional Delivery Lead who has acknowledged the impact this has on the ability to plan for the rollout of the Family Hub approach.
- 5.4.2. Leicester is working closely with other authorities in the East Midlands region that are also seeking to introduce Family Hubs so that best practice is shared. Similar barriers and concerns have been identified across the region by those local authorities that are part of the Family Hub and Start for Life programme.
- 5.4.3. From the existing set of twelve Children, Young People and Family Centres, five have been identified as early adopters of the Family Hubs model. At Braunstone, Belgrave, Eyres Monsell, Highfields and Thurnby Lodge Children, Young People and Families Centres the Family Hub branding and information material has been visible since May 2023.

- 5.4.4. To complement the physical Family Hub sites, a basic web presence has been developed at <https://families.leicester.gov.uk/family-hub>. This represents phase one of the development which was to meet the minimum expectations for delivery by April as set by the Department for Education. Further work is planned under phase two to add additional detail, build in interactive features and develop the website to be the one stop shop for family information (to completely replace families.leicester.gov.uk as the primary channel for parents, carers, service providers, etc.).
- 5.4.5. Strong governance arrangements to support the rollout of the Family Hubs approach are now in place. There is a set of core delivery workstreams which cut across the funded strands and ensure consistency in delivery across the project. These are supported by network provision groups which incorporate operational specialists across the local partnership that are aligned to the funded delivery strands. Many of the stakeholders identified to be part of the network provision groups attended a partnership event in the spring which helped to build a collective vision for each of the funded strands in the Family Hubs approach.
- 5.4.6. In addition to bringing in the voices of professionals, the input of parents and carers is being sought through the establishment of the Parent and Carer Panel. This group is only in its infancy, but a real focus is being placed on making sure this group is as diverse as possible – representing views from different communities. A Family Hubs participation lead has responsibility for driving engagement with young people and families as well as with linking with local communities to strengthen the family hubs network.
- 5.4.7. To build brand awareness of Family Hubs, representatives from the programme, including both staff and parent champions, have attended events as part of the Get Up and Go summer programme. This has provided the opportunity to speak to families about the Family Hubs approach and share information about the offer.

5.5. Next steps

- 5.5.1. Following from the soft launch events as part of Get Up and Go, a full launch for Family Hubs will take place in the autumn and will include a day of events tied to Family Hub locations, including signposting towards the digital platform and introduce the concept of the Family Hub network.
- 5.5.2. In line with the delivery plan, services and training will be commissioned (including Solihull, PEEP and Mellow Bumps) and a workforce development strategy implemented to coordinate a programme of training across topics to satisfy the minimum expectations.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The programme will be funded by DfE S31 Grant for 23/24 Family Hubs and Start for life programme , revenue £1.74m and capital £0.08m.

Paresh Radia Principal Accountant

6.2 Legal implications

Any funds received from the DfE and/or the DHSC may be considered a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and will need to be assessed against its principles and/or check if a Subsidy Scheme has been registered. Any funding paid by the Council may also need to be assessed in accordance with the same subsidy controls. Legal can assist if required.

If any goods and/or services are required to be procured they must be done so in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (**PCR**) and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (**CPR**) which Legal and Procurement can advise.

A Powers, Solicitor.

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public-Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report provides an update on the progress towards the Family Hubs model in line with the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme funded by the DfE and DHSC.

Supporting families to care for their babies, children and young people has an important role to play in reducing health and education disparities right from the start, and improving physical, emotional, cognitive and social outcome longer term. The reason why a family does not engage with a service is often multifaceted. Families who feel marginalised, economically disadvantaged or socially excluded may be less likely to engage in interventions because they feel under-represented in existing service provision. Services that are accessible, universal and available to all families are critical for identifying families who need support.

Our children, young people and families' centres provide a range of services that support parents and carers from across all protected characteristics to give their children the best start in life. Start for Life is designed to help babies, children and young people to thrive.

All families should have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing. It is important that equality considerations are embedded throughout the process.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are limited climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. However, as service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon emissions,

impacts can be managed through measures such as encouraging sustainable staff travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as applicable to the service and any changes implemented.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

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7. Background information and other papers:

8. Summary of appendices:

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?