

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Family Hubs Development

Report of Graham Reiter and Audrey Kingham, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member for Children's Services

Purpose of report

To provide an update in relation to DfE funding for Family Hub developments in Northumberland.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Agree to proceed with the funding for the Family Hub offer.
2. Support the development of the governance and wider processes to underpin this.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Enjoying, Connecting, Living and Learning priority in the NCC Corporate Plan 21-24.

Key Issues

1. Northumberland has been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who can receive additional funding to develop the Family Hub offer. The overall amount potentially available for Northumberland between Autumn 2022 and March 2025 is indicated to be between £3.321m and £3.446m.
2. We have been working on developing the Family Hub model in Northumberland for some time building on the already established Early Help

Locality Model across the county. This has been supported by the change in partnership arrangements for the Public Health 0-19 service.

3. There are clear expectations of what services need to be put in place which are detailed in the report.
4. Strategic oversight, governance arrangements and partnership and place engagement need to be put in position promptly to access the monies and to be in a position to bid for further Trailblazer funds which are coming on stream imminently. As noted above we will build on the current Family Hub developments and structures to achieve this and link into wider partnership governance developments that are taking place.
5. There is a need to further develop capacity to support this work, which will utilise existing project and support capacity and be enhanced through the incoming grant funding. There is also a need to further develop the cross departmental and multi-agency data sharing to meet the funding requirements.

1. Background

The development of Family Hubs is a national DfE / DHSC agenda which is based upon the Best Start for Life report.

“Family Hubs are centres which, as part of integrated family services ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19 receive early help to overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships. Effective early intervention can improve children’s wellbeing, educational attainment, and life chances, reduce family poverty, improve mental health and lead to lower crime, unemployment and other negative outcomes which carry significant cost to the public purse. These centres enhance integrated working by enabling easier access to support, better outcomes for families, more effective service delivery and smarter use of budgets.”

Funding of £301m has been committed by Central Government up to March 2025 to support 75 upper tier local authorities to develop the family hub model in their areas.

Northumberland Position

Northumberland has been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who can receive additional funding to develop the Family Hub offer. We have received notification of our indicative funding levels in the last week subject to final confirmation and our commitment to sign up to the requirements of the programme, its delivery and development. The overall amount potentially available for Northumberland between Autumn 2022 and March 2025 is indicated to be between £3.321m and £3.446m.

Expectations

We are expected to work with local partners to:

- Open Family Hubs and deliver visible change for families in the first half of 2023.
- Deliver services through our Family Hub Model.
- Agree to the set of minimum expectations across all areas of the programme set out within the DfE programme guide.
- Commit to meeting the minimum expectations by March 2025 at the latest.

There are a significant number of minimum expectations in the key service areas which we will be expected to develop; these are:

- Parenting support.
- Parent–infant relationships and perinatal mental health support.
- Early language and the Home Learning Environment.
- Infant feeding.

Within Northumberland we are on a positive journey in some of these areas but there is significant work to do in others. All areas will require multi-agency input and in some areas to be led by health or education colleagues.

We will also be required to:

- Appoint a single named accountable lead for Start for Life (the programme guide suggests this is the DCS or DPH).
- Appoint named leads for our Family Hubs and Start for Life programme / transformation team to develop and appoint to the team.
- Work with the National Centre for Family Hubs and Start for Life Unit to share learning and best practice.
- Implement Central Government branding requirements.
- Engage with the digital solutions being developed through the Family Hubs Growing Up Well Project.
- Commit to all data collection and monitoring expectations associated with the programme, including if services are commissioned out to other providers.
- Agree to take part in the national evaluation of the programme if approached to do so.
- Commit to use the funding in line with the programme guide, and to either incrementally add to existing services, complement existing services or offer new services.

We will be asked to sign up to these commitments in the late summer / early autumn. In preparation for doing this we are required to have engaged and consulted with a range of people. This will include formal sign up from:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Children's Services
- Director of Public Health
- Chief Financial Officer
- Leader of the Council
- Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board

In addition we will be expected to have engaged with the following:

- Local MP(s)
- Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
- Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
- Integrated Care Board Executive leads
- Local providers of services that are relevant to programme delivery i.e. local health systems, e.g. NHS trust, local midwifery team, health visitor leads.
- Local third sector / voluntary, community / faith organisations / education settings and local agencies, where relevant to delivery of the programme through Family Hubs locally.

Developments So Far

We have been working on developing the Family Hub model in Northumberland for some time building on the already established Early Help Locality Model across the county. This has been supported by the change in partnership arrangements for the Public Health 0-19 service. Currently activity has:

- Established a Family Hub implementation group and five stakeholder working groups involving a range of partners.
- Progressed the colocation of partner health services into the current Children's Centre buildings including midwifery, health visiting and primary mental health services.
- Been part of regional improvement work to share expertise.
- Gathered information and views from parents, carers and young people using our services.
- Identified a soft launch date of 28th September to rebrand current Children's Centre buildings as Family Hubs.

2. Wider Issues

Capacity

Developments so far within Northumberland have been led by staff sitting within the Early Help and Prevention service. In making a commitment to deliver the Family Hub programme and drawing down the funding attached we are making a significant commitment to develop and deliver services.

To do this we are required to demonstrate we have done a thorough needs analysis, developed a clear project delivery plan with milestones and outcomes, developed our Start for Life website with our offer for all new parents and committed to opening Family Hubs by the first part of 2023.

This is in addition to all the development required to ensure that the services we want to deliver are in place, that we are measuring and monitoring engagement and impact and working with families, young people and partner agencies to work towards sustainable services for the future.

Whilst we will receive funding within 22/23, we have been advised that this will be in two sums, the first not being provided until after the October cut off date for sign up.

Data Sharing

One of the key aspects which the programme stresses must be delivered on is the ability to use data to identify and support those families in need of help who may not be engaging with services. This aligns with the data sharing requirements of the Supporting Families programme which also brings with it considerable potential funding.

We are not currently in a position in Northumberland where we have a clear commitment across different local authority departments or with partner agencies to share individual level data.

This will hamper our ability to deliver on this programme and creates a risk that we could lose funding in Years 2 and 3.

Governance

There are currently a significant number of multi-agency strategic groups which meet in Northumberland who consider issues in relation to children and families. There has been some mapping of these groups and a commitment made to try and streamline these.

However, it is clear that sign up for this programme requires a clear governance route which needs to be established quickly. As stated in the 'developments so far' there is a Family Hub Implementation Group which does feed into the Children and Young People's Partnership but going forward this group needs to have more prominence and the governance arrangements for it ensure that all senior leaders in key agencies are well sighted on the Family Hub requirements and developments.

3. Recommendations

1. For the Council to agree that Northumberland want to sign up to this programme.
2. Agreement to be reached about who and how the strategic leads of the key partners will be approached as well as the other named interested parties. Once this is completed and sign up agreed at that level further meetings can be arranged with more operational managers to discuss practical solutions to the development of the programme and service areas.
3. Agreement to be reached about the single accountable lead and the governance arrangements initially for this programme to ensure it has strategic level oversight.
4. Agreement to be given to start to develop and recruit to a project team to deliver this programme prior to the initial grant being received. This may include either seconding or commissioning staff from partner agencies.
5. Commitment to be given to overcome the current barriers in relation to data sharing which exist within the Council and between the Council and partner agencies.

Implications

Policy	This is part of the national Best Start in Life policy and locally is key to children and families getting the right support at the right time.
Finance and value for money	This is bringing significant national funding to Northumberland and will build on the effective work that is already in place in relation to early help and Family Hub developments.
Legal	'The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council''
Procurement	
Human Resources	
Property:	As part of the developments we are looking to maximise the use of and co-location of services in Children's Centre buildings wherever possible and appropriate.
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	N/A
Crime & Disorder:	
Customer Considerations:	This will support children and families being able to access the right support in one place.
Carbon Reduction:	
Health and Wellbeing	
Wards:	All wards

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
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Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Interim Deputy Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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