

People and Health Overview Committee

2/9/2021

Development of Family Hubs

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

Members are invited to comment on the Family Hub service delivery model and to support the development of Family Hubs in Dorset.

Reason for Recommendation:

The evidence base for the development of Family Hubs is strong and the government has committed to championing this service delivery model. Overview Committee is asked to provide comment at this early stage to help inform the policy and strategic approach locally.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Government has committed to championing Family Hubs as a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, the connections between families, professionals, services providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Hub buildings are supported by virtual offers, with services for families with children of all ages.

- 1.2 Family Hubs make an important contribution to prevention and early help, through the delivery of services such as ante and postnatal support, parenting support, help with getting children ready for school or in child development. However, they are much more than that and provide links to specialist services which could include learning disability support, housing support, drug and alcohol services, relationship breakdown support, social care services, financial support services, fostering and adoption support.
- 1.3 There are strong foundations to build on to deliver this approach in Dorset which would include the development of a digital front door and service offer; identification of appropriate physical locations to act as a central access point for localities, changes to the children centre delivery model and better integration of local service delivery which could include coordination of support, co-location of multi-agency service delivery and shared case management systems.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 Changing the model of delivery of services through Family Hubs will change the pattern of spend. We are awaiting an announcement from the Department for Education of an opportunity to bid for funding to support the development of Family Hubs, but it is yet to be confirmed.
- 2.2 We are likely to need to invest in digital service delivery, reduce the spend on building overheads in some areas and seek opportunities for income generation and co-location in other areas. A full business case will be developed to identify the investment and return on investment associated with this model of service delivery. This work will be undertaken in partnership with the council's transformation and change teams as part of the council's overall transformation programme.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

- 3.1 Evidence shows that disadvantaged and vulnerable children suffer from poor outcomes across the key domains of development from conception to 19. Children in school who are either a Child in Need, have a Special Education Need or Disability, or receive Free School Meals will do much worse than their peers. These domains are key drivers of later life chances, including long-term employment and health. Offering seamless pathways of whole family support has been shown to improve wellbeing and health outcomes.

4. Climate implications

- 4.1 The development of a strong digital service offer and improving signposting to local offers of support provides the opportunity to reduce travel and deliver associated reduction in carbon emissions.

5. Other Implications

- 5.1 Central to the delivery of Family Hubs is the importance of integration with the community and voluntary sector.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.1 An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as the policy and strategy on the delivery of Family Hubs is developed. There is strong evidence that the development of more joined up services will improve service access and life outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Children's Centres in Dorset

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 None

10. Introduction and Background

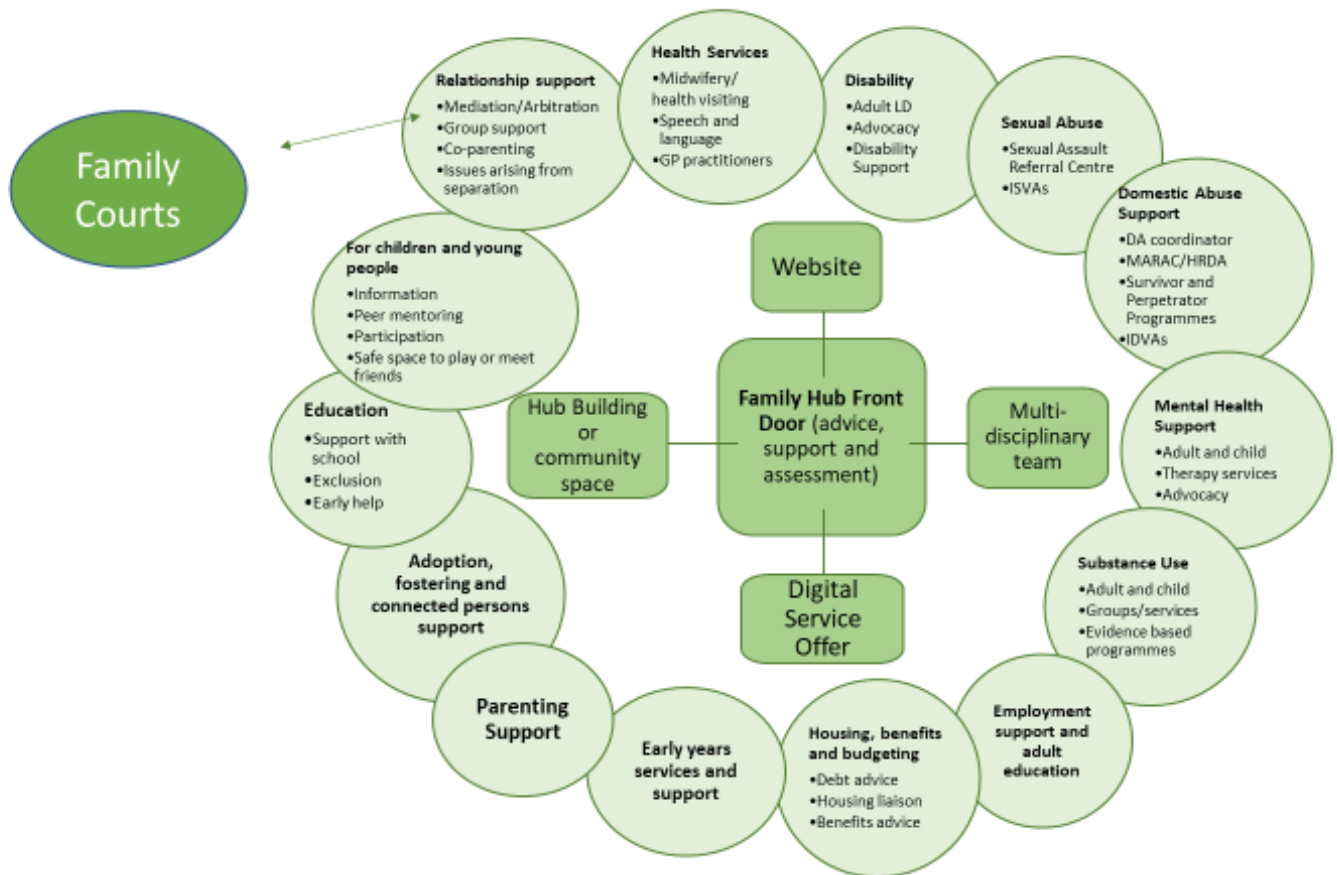
- 10.1 This paper provides information about the proposed development of Family Hub services for families across the county, in response to national policy developments.
- 10.2 The government has recognised the need to improve long-term support for vulnerable families, building on their manifesto commitment to champion Family Hubs to better service families with integrated health and education services that can have life-long impact.

- 10.3 As a result of this commitment the government has created a National Centre for Family Hubs, launched in May 2021, that will support local areas to set up, develop and evaluate the effectiveness of new Family Hubs. There have been a small number of opportunities for local authorities to bid for funding to support their development and an indication that there is likely to be further bidding rounds in the coming months.
- 10.4 The development of Family Hubs is a local commitment in the Dorset Children and Families Plan (2020-2023) and Dorset is part of a pathfinder Private Law pilot project with the local judiciary to use a Family Hub approach to support separating families and improve outcomes for children.

11. Family Hubs

- 11.1 Family Hubs aim to strengthen families by providing help with challenges that may hamper children's social, emotional, and physical and educational progress and help to prevent family breakdown. They have social mobility and family stability at their core.
- 11.2 A Family Hub provides a central access point for integrated services, which may be offered in a building named a Family Hub, or be located in a building that is called something else or be online – offering a virtual/digital access point.
- 11.3 Where Family Hubs are provided in buildings these tend to offer co-location with other services in the same building and importantly have close links to services that are offered elsewhere – providing seamless integrated whole family services, where families only have to tell their story once and people work together to give the family the support they need.
- 11.4 Whole family working not only includes brothers and sisters and parents/carers but reaches across extended family such as grandparents, aunts/uncles and other connected people and can co-locate services for older people where that makes sense to the local community.
- 11.5 Family Hubs make an important contribution to prevention and early help, through the delivery of services such as ante and postnatal support, parenting support, help with getting children ready for school or in child development. However, they are much more than that and provide links to specialist services which could include learning disability support, housing support, drug and alcohol services, relationship breakdown support, social care services, financial support services, fostering and adoption support.

- 11.6 An important element of Family Hubs is the links to and integration with the community and voluntary sector and with wider partners such as health partners and schools. One Family Hub in an area acts as a central access point for families and links virtually to all the service providers in a locality to understand who is best placed to provide support – coordinating statutory, private and voluntary approaches to meeting needs.
- 11.7 Many local authorities have repurposed some of their children’s centres to become Family Hubs or have sought to move services traditionally delivered in council owned children’s centres into different community buildings, churches, citizen’s advice bureaux, libraries or GP practices to create Family Hubs. They have also strengthened their digital and online offer of support to families to help them to be able to support themselves.
- 11.8 The Family Hub model makes use of existing facilities wherever possible and helps reduce the need for multiple premises and the overheads associated with this.
- 11.9 A conceptual model of how a Family Hub model could work is provided in the diagram below:



12. Developing Family Hubs in Dorset

12.1 To support the delivery of this model there are several activities that would be required which are listed below. Each of these will be discussed in turn:

- Development of digital front door and support offer
- Identification of appropriate premises to act as central access points
- Integration of pathways of support in communities and making connections between them

12.2 Digital front door and support offer

12.2.1 We currently provide information, advice and an online service directory through our SEND Local Offer and Family Information Service. There is an opportunity to modernise the delivery of these services and link them to online support services such as web-chats and online individual and group support programmes as well as provide proactive information and support at times which would benefit families such as school transition points.

12.2.2 We currently have an integrated front door, our Children's Advice and Duty desk (CHAD), which includes our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and our Early Help Hub. Although this is open to families to contact, it is currently used primarily by professionals. There is an opportunity to explore making this easier to access for families to offer advice and signposting on a range of issues and to connect them with local sources of support.

12.2.3 Implementation of a digital front door and support offer would require investment; however, the functionality is available and there is evidence of successful delivery of a range of services digitally though Covid. Families would still be offered choice of face to face or digital support depending on their preferences and needs.

12.3 Premises for central access points

12.3.1 We currently have 22 children's centres in Dorset, delivered from a mixture of sites that are either owned or leased by the council. In some cases, these are shared sites with other services and in others they are for the sole purpose of delivery of children's centre activities. Further detail is provided as an appendix to this report.

- 12.3.2 Over time the service delivery model for children's centres has changed and they have become more integrated with the overall model for Dorset Council children's services delivery and feedback from families and communities is that some children's centres are in locations that are not best placed to meet community needs.
- 12.3.3 Children's centres have historically focused on providing support for children in their early years (0-5), however it is clear that families need support all through their children's lives and that there is growing evidence that taking a whole life course approach is more effective.
- 12.3.3 There is an opportunity to expand the offer in a number of these to become central Family Hub access points that that would then be better able to coordinate networks of community support from a range of other services including the digital support offer. This work will seek to complement the emerging customer strategy for the council,
- 12.3.4 It is likely that the development of a better online support offer and integration with other services as described in the next section would result in fewer children centre buildings owned or leased by the council as services would be delivered in a different way.
- 12.3.4 Changing how children's centre activities are delivered may require public consultation.

12.4 Pathways of support in communities

- 12.4.1 A wide range of services have a vital role to play in supporting families and reducing disparities. However, disadvantaged, and vulnerable families often experience significant difficulty as they interact with a complex service landscape and have to constantly 're-tell their story' to different services. Often professionals working in these services face practical barriers to working together as a team around the family, such as information sharing.
- 12.4.2 We are well on our way with integration of service delivery within children's services, but there is more that we could do to integrate service delivery by other teams and organisation in localities to support whole family and intergenerational working, including the community and voluntary sector.
- 12.4.3 This may be through co-location in a Family Hub building, through shared online service delivery or through service delivery by multi-agency teams in existing community spaces.

12.4.4 Making this work will require a mixture of asset mapping and a strong digital service offer as well as people who can coordinate services and pathways of support. This may include shared case management systems for agencies to work together.

12.4.5 In some communities and local areas service gaps may become apparent and so local areas could commission or create services to meet local needs. This process could be overseen by strengthened Local Alliance Groups.

13. Conclusion

13.1 The government have committed to support the development of Family Hubs and have invested in a Centre of Excellence to support national rollout and it is likely to be supported by further funding opportunities.

13.2 The evidence base for Family Hubs shows they can improve outcomes for children and families and offering better access to support.

13.3 The Family Courts in Dorset have already committed to Dorset being a Family Law pathfinder through the delivery of a Family Hub approach to separating and separated parents.

13.4 There are strong foundations in place in Dorset that would enable us to develop a Family Hub approach and we have committed to this in our Children, Young People and Families Plan (2020-23).

13.5 The implementation of Family Hubs would require changing the way we deliver whole family services including strengthening our digital offer, reviewing, and changing our children centre offer and greater service integration with partners and the community and voluntary sector.

14. Recommendation

14.1 Members of People and Health Overview Committee are invited to comment on the Family Hub service delivery model and to support the development of this approach in Dorset.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Appendix 1: Children's Centres in Dorset

Locality	Name	Details	Asset status	Comments
Chesil (Weymouth & Portland)	Bincombe Valley Children's Centre	Operates from the former Top Club Youth Centre in Littlemoor Weymouth	Dorset Council	A local community youth club and other community groups make use of the premises
	Outlooks Children's Centre – Portland	Originally established as a Family centre prior to the creation of children's centres	Dorset Council	Not in an ideal location for the community and many activities offered off site
	Westham Children's Centre	Located on Conifers Primary School site and premises shared with Little Firs Pre-school	Dorset Council	
	Mulberry Children's Centre	Operates from the former Tides youth centre on Newstead Road	Dorset Council	
East Dorset	Corfe Mullen Children's Centre	Shares premises with Corfe Mullen library	Dorset Council	Running cost split between children's centre and library
	Ferndown Children's Centre	Operates from Ferndown First School (Academy)	Lease	Not an ideal location for meeting needs of families and most activities happen off site
	West Moors Children's Centre	Located in former Caretakers bungalow on West Moors Middle School site.	Dorset Council	School are keen to use of accommodation for their own purposes.
	Wimborne (Leigh Park) Children's Centre	Site leased from Wimborne town Council	Lease – commenced in 1/9/10 (expires 2044)	Part of the accommodation is used by Leigh park Community Association
	Verwood Children's Centre	Operates from the Hub in Verwood	Dorset Council	
	Upton Children's Centre	Operates from Upton Library site	Dorset Council	
Purbeck	Swanage Children's Centre	Located between Swanage Youth Centre and Swanage Day	Dorset Council	Strong Community Trust interest to make better use of the

Locality	Name	Details	Asset status	Comments
		Centre. Youth Centre has been transferred to Community Trust.		whole site to meet community needs
	Wareham Children's Centre	Located on Wareham St Mary's Primary School (Academy) site.	Dorset Council	
	Bovington Children's Centre	On school site		
West Dorset	Beaminster Children's Centre	Operates from the former Beaminster Youth & Community Centre	Dorset Council	The Prout Bridge Youth Project is also operating from this site and have been interested in taking over the premises
	Bridport Children's Centre	Located on Based on Bridport St Mary's Primary School (Academy)	Operates under a Transfer of Control Agreement – commenced on 6/11/08 (expires in 2033).	Provides office accommodation for DC staff and is used by partner agencies to deliver services
	Lyme Regis Children's Centre	Located on St Michal's Primary School site and shares space with pre-school	Transfer of Control agreement – commenced 15/2/08 (expires on 14/2/33)	Outreach base only
	Maiden Newton Children's Centre	Based on Greenford Primary School site at Maiden Newton - Based on Greenford Primary School site at Maiden Newton	Dorset Council	Outreach only
Dorchester	Broadmayne Children's Centre	Located on Broadmayne First School site.	Dorset Council (school site)	Accommodation shared with Broadmayne & West Knighton Pre-School, who are now using majority of accommodation

Locality	Name	Details	Asset status	Comments
	Dorchester Children's Centre	Poundbury	Lease commenced on 30/3/12 for 25 years – expires	
North Dorset	Blandford Children's Centre	Site shared with Archbishop Wake Primary School (Academy) and the Blandford Learning & Skills Centre. Centre includes Nursery provision and Out of School Club	Dorset Council	Provides office accommodation for DC employees. Offers meeting space for partners and other services in the area
	Shaftesbury Children's Centre	Operates from Shaftesbury primary School Site on land retained by DC upon academy conversation. Site includes Nursery provision	Dorset Council	
	Sherborne Children's Centre	Site leased by DC from Sherborne Castle Estate and sub-let to Sherborne Area Youth and Community Centre Trust, who are operating Youth Provision on site.	Lease - commencing on 06/12/16 (expiring on 05/12/46)	