

People and Health Overview Committee

3 May 2022

Family Hubs

For Review and Consultation

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

Local Councillor(s): All

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Brief Summary: This report provides an overview of the development of Family Hubs in Dorset providing an outline of the national policy expectations; the proposed approach to implementation locally and the timeline for delivery. It provides an update to an early scoping paper brought to the People and Health Overview Committee in September 2021 as further government guidance and information is now available.

Recommendation: Members of People and Health Overview Committee are invited to comment on the Family Hub service delivery model and to support the approach to implementation in Dorset.

Reason for Recommendation: Members of the People and Health Overview committee supported the development of Family Hubs in Dorset in a paper received in September 2021. This paper provides further detail on the proposed approach and a timeline for implementation,

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 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. They are also a commitment in the Children's Services Commissioning Strategy (2022 – 2027).

- 1.2 The Government has committed to championing the development of Family Hubs and the Department for Education has made clear its expectation that this approach will be adopted by all local areas in the next 2 years. The government have commissioned the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families to set up a 'National Centre for Family Hubs' to support local areas with implementation.
- 1.3 The council has agreed an investment from the Transformation Fund to support implementation of this important policy area as part of the Children's Services 5-year medium term financial plan. In addition a bid has been submitted to a national transformation programme, led by the Department for Education (DfE) to support our approach. The outcomes of this is expected in May 2022. If we are unsuccessful in this bid and without success in future funding bids, savings will be hard to deliver.
- 1.4 Seventy-five local areas have been chosen by the Department of Education (DfE) as eligible for a share of £302 million set aside by the government to develop flagship family hubs. Unfortunately, Dorset is not one of the selected areas.

2. What are Family Hubs?

- 2.1 The Department for Education has clarified the framework for delivery of Family Hubs. They see them as a way of joining up locally and bringing existing family help services together to improve access to services; connections between families, professionals, services, providers and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs bring together services for families with children of all ages with a great start for life at their core. They can include hub buildings as well as a virtual offer and must deliver on the following principles:
 - **Accessible** – through clearly branded and communicated hub buildings, virtual offers and outreach
 - **Connected** – family hubs drive progress on joining up professionals, services and providers (state, private, voluntary) through co-location, data sharing, shared outcomes and governance. Moving from services delivered for the under 5s, to families with children of all ages and reduce fragmentation

- **Relationship-centred** – practice in a family hub will build on family strengths and improve family relationships to address underlying issues

2.2 Family Hubs are a key part of the Best Start for Life vision, published by the Department for Health and Social Care in 2021 and although designed to support families from conception all the way up to adulthood, it is important that a core part of the Hub offer is focused on ensuring children have the best start in life. Evidence shows that a child's experiences from conception to five play a critical role in their development, and that the early years represent a key opportunity for intervention.

2.3 Family Hubs are more than early years services, offering a 'front door' to a range of services and support including early help and specialist services such as learning disability support, drug and alcohol services and social care services as well as support provided by community groups and the voluntary and community sector. They will provide whole family working that 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.

3. The case for change

3.1 We have a well-managed system in children's services and are confident that we are seeing providing support in the right part of the system, however we know that we are seeing more children, young people and families with complex needs and that we could do even more to support families earlier and make it easier for them to access support.

3.2 The lack of readily accessible support for the entire family is having a troubling impact within the most vulnerable communities and can result in children needing help from a social worker and statutory interventions such as child protection or coming into care.

3.3 Families tell us that they want to access help and support in welcoming and non-stigmatising spaces from multi-disciplinary professionals, but where they can also access joined up support from the community.

3.4 Our workforce also tell us that they do not have access to sufficient effective spaces for work with children and families or to touch down when they are on home visits and that they would benefit from greater

opportunities for co-location with partners so that they can improve information sharing and support to the families we collectively serve.

4. Our approach to delivering Family Hubs in Dorset

- 4.1 Family Hubs in Dorset will provide a link to and integration with the community and voluntary sectors and with wider partners such as health and schools. Given our rural nature one Family Hub in an area will act as a central access point for families and link virtually to all the service providers in a locality to understand who is best placed to meet needs.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Our Family Hub model will make use of existing facilities wherever possible and help reduce the need for multiple premises and the overheads associated with this. This sits well with our delivery model Dorset Children Thrive - a multi-disciplinary locality model across six areas. The values and professional make-up are largely replicated across localities; however delivery is tailored to local contexts and needs.
- 4.4 A change programme funded through the council's transformation fund has been created to deliver our approach. A senior project manager is leading the project and has begun the process of engagement with children, young people, families and communities. Attendance at Local Alliance Groups meetings are scheduled to discuss local priorities and potential delivery sites. Local members will be invited to be involved in locality discussions.
- 4.5 The programme will deliver a digital front door connecting services and support in localities with a small number of Family Hub buildings that facilitate connection with all the services in a local community. Existing locality services including early help and social care will be co-located with partner agencies. Some services will be delivered in existing community spaces. Community development officers will develop and capture networks of support and help navigate local sources of support as relationships strengthen and develop over time.

- 4.6 Research and engagement is underway to develop the service delivery model and it is anticipated that the first Family Hub will open in the east of the county in September 2022. There will be a rolling programme of implementation across the rest of the county following that with completion of the programme by 2025.

5. What does this mean for children, young people and families?

- 5.1 The case studies below show how a Family Hub can support a family in practice:

Andrea dropped into a Family Hub for vitamins for her and her children and a local health visitor asked if there was any other help that Andrea needed. She told the health visitor that she was having a tough time as she and her husband were arguing a lot and struggling financially. She was feeling low and she was worried about the impact of the arguing on her children. One of them had started to get in trouble at school. It was identified that she needed support in a number of areas including: her wellbeing, debt advice, housing support, relationship support for her and her husband and support for her children. She started working with an early help worker who developed a package of whole family support which included emotional wellbeing support; access to couple counselling; debt advice and maximising of benefits; housing advice to identify a more affordable property; access to CV support and interview coaching for her husband who wanted to change jobs; support to talk to the school about the issues affecting their children – which resulted in some additional support at school. The family appreciated the comprehensive offer of support and were able to make multiple changes: *‘thank you for noticing that all was not well and helping me to access support, things are much improved – we are talking to each other more and getting on better – a whole wight has been lifted from my shoulders’*.

Tom, a single father of three children sought help through the online family hub offer, as he didn’t want to go to the Family Hub on his own. He used the Chat function on the online offer and told the duty worker that he was finding it difficult to cope. One of his children aged 5 years has a range of sensory needs and his behaviour was very challenging. He was waiting for an autism assessment. Tom had no day to day help and was exhausted. The duty worker noted that there was several agencies already involved with the family which needed better coordination. The worker called a team around the family meeting and all the agencies involved agreed to work to a single plan for Tom and his children. As a result, Tom feels more

in control of what is happening and is attending a parent support groups for children with sensory needs at the Family Hub after a worker from the Hub visited him at home and agreed to meet him outside for the first few times he came. Tom feels much more supported.

6. Financial Implications

The delivery of Family Hubs is one element of the Children's Services 5-year financial strategy. An investment of £342,000 has been agreed and incorporate into the budget and is anticipated to deliver £2.5M revenue savings over the life of the project. Savings will be delivered through a reduction in premises overheads, reduction in duplication and more coordinated support delivering better outcomes for families.

7. Climate Implications

The development of virtual networks of support and an online digital family offer for some services will help support a reduction in travel and associated carbon footprint.

8. Well-being and Health Implications

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.

9. Other Implications

N/A

10. Risk Assessment

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment is currently underway.

12. Appendices

13. Background Papers

[Development of Family Hubs – People and Health Overview Committee \(2/920/21\)](#)

[The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days Dorset Children, Young People and Families Plan \(2020 – 23\)](#)
[Children’s Commissioning Strategy](#)