

People and Health Overview Committee

21 January 2025

Family Hubs Update

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

In February 2024 a report outlining proposals for the development of Dorset's Family Hub Network Model aiming to improve access to and take up of child and family services, in line with requirements of the Department for Education's grant funded Transformation Programme, local need and strategic priorities were shared with People and Health Overview Committee.

It was requested that a progress report be presented to the Committee within 6-12 months.

This report provides an update on Dorset's Family Hub development and delivery of the Department for Education's grant funded Transformation Programme.

Recommendation: That members comment on the details of the update and support the future development of Family Hubs across Dorset.

Reasons for Recommendation: As a key mechanism for providing support to families in all localities, it is important that all members are kept abreast of developments.

1. **Background**

- 1.1. DfE grant funded Family Hub Transformation Programme
- 1.2. The DfE describe Family Hubs as ‘a place-based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services. They bring services together to improve ACCESS, improve the CONNECTION between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put RELATIONSHIPS at the heart of family support’.
- 1.3. Dorset have received funding from the DfE Family Hub Transformation Programme 1 (TF1) to develop and deliver a Family Hub approach. In addition to this funding, Dorset have also invested council transformation funding.
- 1.4. Dorset committed to open at least one Family Hub per locality area and to meet specific delivery requirements as defined by the DfE, in addition to ensuring that local needs and strategic priorities underpin the development of our Family Hub approach:
 - Family Hub approach meets basic criteria of DfE issued Family Hub Model Framework
 - Family Hubs deliver minimum service offer in line with DfE issued Family Hub Service Expectations and Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide
 - Family Hubs operate in line with DfE issued Site Definitions Family Hubs TF1 MI Guidance_Final.pdf

2. **Dorset’s Approach to Family Hub Development**

- 2.1. Family Hubs are seen as a significant vehicle in which we will deliver much of the Strategic Alliance for Children, Young People and Families Plan and Family Help element of the Families First for Children Pathfinder, enabling non-stigmatised Family Help to be delivered within localities. This approach is aligned to the corporate priority Communities for All.

- 2.2. In line with corporate priority 'Communities for All', we are taking an Asset Based Community Development Approach to the design of our Family Hub Model, aiming to build on strengths in local areas and shift power into communities.
- 2.3. Local Alliance Groups (LAGs) are the operational arm of Dorset's Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People. There are 7 Local Alliance Groups operating across our 6 locality areas, bringing together representatives from across the multi-agency partnership to plan, coordinate and deliver information and support for families.
- 2.4. Developing our hubs locality by locality we are engaging with partners through the Local Alliance Groups to support the design and development of our Family Hub approach in each locality area through:
 - identification of community assets and hub venues
 - identification of suitably placed VCS organisations to take on leadership and management of hubs
 - engagement and communication within communities
 - building and developing relationships across organisations, planning and coordinating service delivery from across hub network
- 2.5. This approach has led to a mixed model of Family Hubs, by building on and developing services and provision from existing community assets (community centres, youth centres, village halls, libraries and children's centres).

3. **Delivery Model - Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Led Family Hubs.**

- 3.1. Unlike many other Local Authorities who operate their Family Hubs within council children's services, our preferred model is for our Family Hubs to be led and managed by Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.
- 3.2. These types of organisations are well established in communities, with relationships and insights to the communities they serve, making them best placed to lead our Family Hubs.
- 3.3. Through engagement with the LAGs, we have identified suitably placed VCS organisations to take on the role of leading and managing our Family

Hubs. This has been achieved through a Service Level Agreement with attached grant funding.

3.4. The role of a Lead Organisation is to:

To manage a Dorset Family Hub building include:

- *Provision of a warm welcome and accessible environment for families and other Family Hub delivery partners*
- *Coordination of delivery of services in the Family Hub building, managing room bookings and ensuring environments enable effective service delivery of Family Hub Delivery Partners (e.g. Locality Teams, Health Services and Voluntary and Community Organisations)*
- *Direct delivery of services to children, young people and families*
- *Collation of information on delivery and uptake of services to support DfE reporting requirements and ongoing service development.*
- *Contribution to Family Hub development and delivery through representation at partnership forums and engagement activities*
- *Promotion of Dorset's Family Hubs*
- *Engagement in Family Hub workforce development activity*
- *Sharing of information and data in line with agreed protocol to support DfE reporting requirements and ongoing service development.*
- *To provide regular updates to the Local Alliance Group (LAG), enabling partnership contribution to development and delivery of family hub approach*
- *To develop mechanisms to enable families to contribute to development and ongoing delivery of Family Hub approach.*
- *Sharing intelligence and good practice to support delivery of effective and impactful services for children and families.*
- *compliance with legislation, good practice and relevant policies and procedures including safeguarding, health and safety and data protection.*

3.5. *To provide facility management services, to include:*

- *Ensuring the property is open to enable access to services at times that meet the needs of the local community (to include core business hours and flexible delivery at evenings and weekends)*
- *Ensuring the community areas are available for the use of:*
 - a) *other Family Hub Delivery Partners*

b) *The service users*

- *Providing sufficient staff / resource to enable delivery in line with Dorset’s Family Hub Operational Guidance*

4. **Network Approach**

4.1. The rural nature of Dorset presents several challenges for implementing a Family Hub model that meets the needs of all families, as such we are placing emphasis on developing a Family Hub Network, with main Family Hub sites supplemented by associated community outreach points.

4.2. A main Family Hub site as defined by the Department for Education detailed below:

The site is a physical place a family can visit and speak to a trained staff member, face to face, who will provide them with straightforward information or advice on a wide range of family issues spanning the 0-19 (25 with SEND) age range and connect them appropriately to further services across the 0-19 (25 with SEND) age range if they need more targeted or specialist support. These knowledgeable staff are available to connect families to all services in Annex F (Family Hub Service Expectations) of the family hubs and start for life programme guide, in line with the minimum expectations.

4.3. Our local definition of a Family Hub Network Points is:

An identifiable place within a community where families can be connected to information and support and where some children and family services are delivered

4.4. Currently there are 6 designated Main Family Hubs, with a further 5 to be designated this year, bringing the total to 11. The hubs are detailed in the table below along with the connected networks points in each Locality.

Locality	Main Family Hub Sites	Lead Organisation	Designation Date	Connected Network Points
East Locality	The Centre, Ferndown	The Centre Ferndown	Jan 2023	- Corfe Mullen Library - Ferndown Library - Verwood Library - Wimborne Library
	Leigh Park Family Hub	Children’s Services East	Jan 2023	

		Locality Team		
Purbeck Locality	The Focus Centre, Swanage Wareham Family Hub	Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust (sandpdt.org.uk) Home - PYCF	April 2024 Jan 2024	- Wareham Library - Upton Library - Swanage Library - Wareham Children's Centre- - Bovington Children's Centre-- - Lytchett Matravers Library
Dorchester Locality	Dorchester Library	(partnership with DC Libraries/ Locality Team)	Jul 2024	N/A
West Locality	Bridport Children's Centre	Children's Services West Locality Team	Jan 2024	- St Michael's School, Lyme Regis - Lyme Regis Children's Centre - Lyme Regis Library - Bridport Library - Beaminster Library
North Locality	Blandford TBC, Library initial option, but revisiting Blandford Children's Centre The Vale Pantry, Sturminster Newton	Welcome to The Vale Pantry Sturminster Newton Food Bank	Due to open in 2025 Network point Apr 2024 Due to open as main hub in Jan 2025	- Blandford Children's Centre - Buckland Newton Village Hall - Sturminster Newton Library - Sherborne Library - Gillingham Library - Shaftesbury Library - Shaftesbury Children's Centre - Sherborne Children's Centre
Chesil Locality	Portland Community Hospital Littlemoor Central Weymouth (TBC) WOEC	Early conversations with Island Community Action A local charity for local people and The Drop In Portland England	Due to open in 2025 Due to open in Nov 2024 Due to open in 2025 Due to open in 2025	- The Drop in The Drop In Portland England - Littlemoor Library - Portland Library - Wyke Regis Library - Weymouth Library - Mulberry Children's Centre - - Portland Children's Centre

		<p>Littlemoor Hub CIO</p> <p>Exploring Weymouth Outdoor Education</p>		
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5. Children’s Centre Review

- 5.1. Over the years Dorset Council, unlike many other local authorities, has maintained a network of children’s centres, recognising the importance of local community based early support for families. Throughout this time the type of services delivered from the centres has changed significantly, with many no longer offering services in line with the government’s defined core offer. Where services have changed there have been localised community engagement activities to ensure families were kept up to date with developments. Despite changes over the past years, all remain to be ‘designated children’s centres’ managed by Dorset Council.
- 5.2. With the development of Family Hubs, we now have the opportunity to enhance the community based early support offer. Provision delivered through Family Hubs will increase the number of families able to access support with access available to families with children of all ages.
- 5.3 We are presently consulting with families to seek views on formally changing the use of some children’s centres and, if approved, we will formally notify the Department for Education (DfE) that these centres will be de-designated in lieu of our new Family Hub network, which will provide an increased service offer to families across more community spaces. The 90 day public consultation runs from 21 November 2024 to 21 February 2025. The consultation is live on Citizen Space and physical versions shared with all children’s centre users. Links to consultation have been shared on Council’s social media channels and website.

6. Family Hub Online

- 6.1. In addition to the physical Family Hub locations, we have developed an online Family Hub [Family Hub - Dorset Council](#)

- 6.2. The online Family Hub provides an overview of our Family Hub offer as well as single space for young people and families to access online information, guidance and support.

7. **Next Stages of Development**

- 7.1. The DfE Transformation Programme has enabled us to establish a network of places and spaces, to raise awareness of Family Hubs and to bring service delivery partners together to think differently about how we plan and deliver children and family services. We commit to continue to develop our Family Hub approach through:

- 7.1.1. **Designation of remaining Family Hub main sites** - we plan to designate further Family Hub main sites throughout 2025. We have plans for capital works programmes and identifying Lead Organisations.

- 7.1.2. **Continuing to grow our network** - we will continue to work in partnership to identify more Family Hub Network points across our communities aiming to improve access and take up of information and support for all families.

- 7.1.3. **Develop partnership service offer from across our Family Hub Network** - we will continue to work with multi agency delivery partners to increase the offer available to families through our Family Hub network. We will ensure that we are meeting minimum service expectation as defined by the DfE and that services are developed in response to local need.

- 7.1.4. **User engagement to support ongoing design and delivery of Family Hub approach** - we will develop mechanisms for families to be able to share their experiences and views, formally contributing to ongoing development of our Family Hubs.

- 7.1.5. **Improve data recording and monitoring system** - we will develop our current data monitoring systems with improved capabilities to enable routine tracking monitoring an analysis of Family Hub activity and performance across our partnership Family Hub Network in line with our developing outcomes framework.

8. **Future of Family Hubs**

8.1. The recently announced settlement delivers on the government's ambition to give all children the best start in life by increasing spending on early years and family services to over £8 billion in 2025-26. This includes £69 million (nationally) to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs.

8.2. The Milestones for Mission Led Government identifies 'Giving Children the Best Start in Life' and commits to strengthen and join up family services to improve support through pregnancy and early childhood.

This includes continuing to invest in and build up Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes to support early child health, parenting and home learning programmes, and strengthening health visiting services for all families, and improved early identification of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

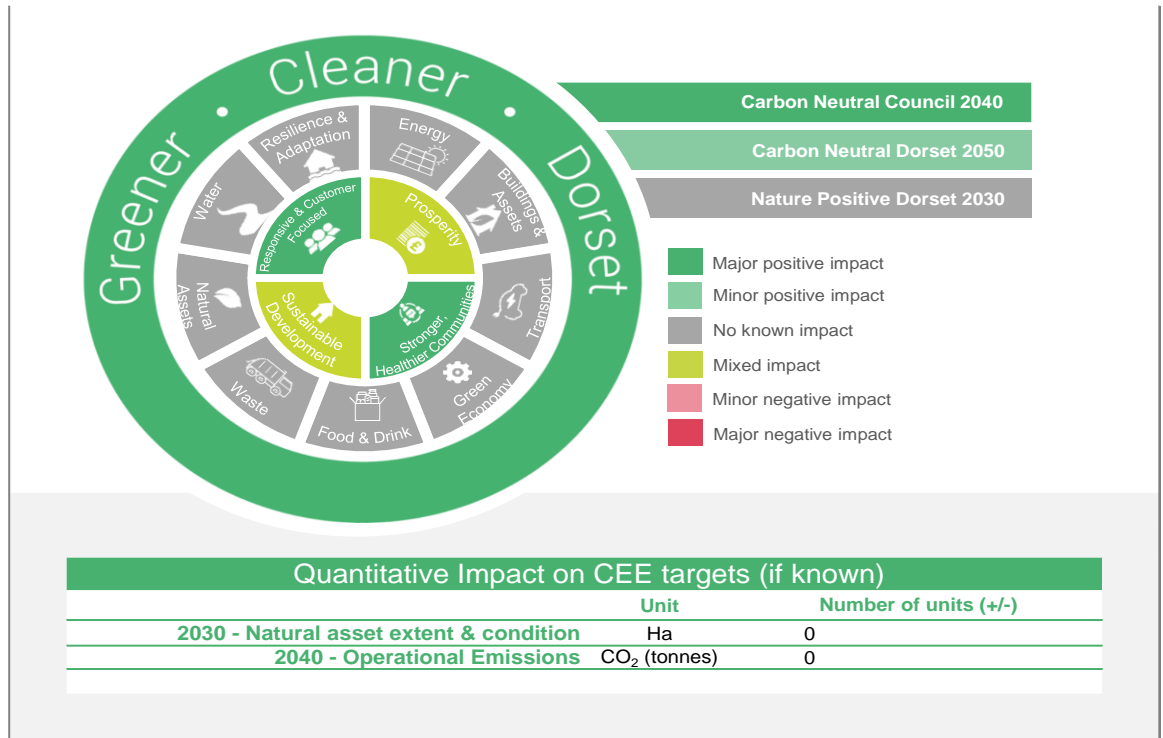
8.3. Local Family Hubs are seen as a significant vehicle in which we will deliver the priorities within the 10-year Children Young People and Families Plan and Families First for Children Pathfinder, enabling place based planning, coordination and delivery of partnership children and family services.

9. **Financial Implications**

9.1. The DfE's grant funded Transformation Programme financed transformation activity enabling development of Dorset's Family Hub approach (£1m). This programme comes to an end in March 2025.

9.2. However following the Autumn budget, on 20 December 2024 the DfE confirmed a provisional funding allocation for 2025-26 of £307,700 programme grant funding of which £94,100 is allocated for capital. Funding is subject to signing a new Memorandum of Understanding to formalise agreement to the programme's expectations to further develop and embed family hub models and delivery.

10. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**



10.1.

11. Well-being and Health Implications

11.1. Family Hubs provide families with a single access point to integrated family support services for early help with social, emotional, and physical needs.

11.2. Family Hubs also provide opportunities for social interaction for all family members, aiming to reduce isolation, support connections and strengthen relationships.

12. Other Implications

There are no other implications to consider

13. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Low Residual Risk: Low

14. Equalities Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessments have been completed and verified by Dorset Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer throughout the transformation period. The impacts for each of the protected characteristics groups are classed as either positive or neutral.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Family Hub Network Map

16. Background Papers

None

17. Report Sign Off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)