



Children, Young People and Education Committee

Tuesday 6 December 2022

REPORT TITLE:	FAMILY HUBS
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an introduction to the Family Hubs programme, which Wirral is one of seven local authorities funded by the Department of Education, through the TF1 (Transformation Fund) to deliver. It provides Elected Members with relevant background information on the national policy and an overview of how the programme will be delivered in Wirral, building on the already well-embedded early help and prevention system.

Family Hubs provide the means by which Wirral Council can optimise a number of existing strategic priorities whilst providing an accessible, relevant, and supportive offer to residents.

The report is aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2026:

- Working for brighter futures for our children, young people and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where our residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.
- Working for happy, active and healthy lives where people are supported, protected and inspired to live independently.

The report supports Priority 3 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure the best start in life for all children and young people.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to exercise oversight of the development of services for children and families and agree to receive a further update on progress in 6 months.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to ensure provision of a comprehensive range of early help services for children and young people. The Family Hubs initiative provides external funding to enhance the local service offer.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Alternative reporting methods were considered but as the Family Hubs programme links to a range of strategic priorities and is fundamental to supporting children, young people and families across the borough awareness and scrutiny is required.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 A family hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services. Hubs deliver these services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).
- 3.2 Family hubs aim to make a positive difference to parents, carers, and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can easily access non-judgmental support for the challenges they may be facing. Family Hubs will provide a universal 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health, and physical health needs, with a comprehensive 'start for life' offer for parents and babies at its core.
- 3.3 Each family hub should be bespoke to the local community it serves but there are three key delivery principles that underpin the national concept:

1. Access: there is a clear and simple way for families with children of all ages to access help and support through a Family Hub building and a Family Hub approach.

2. Connection: Services work together for families, with a universal 'front door', shared outcomes and effective governance. Professionals work together through co-location, data-sharing and a common approach to their work. Families only have to tell their story once, the service is more efficient, and families receive more effective support. Statutory services and voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners work together to get families the help they need.

3. Relationships

The family hub prioritises strengthening relationships and builds on family strengths. Relationships are at the heart of everything that is delivered in family hubs.

- 3.4 The Family Hub development process is a systematic approach to assessing local needs and delivery. It builds a strategic case for Family Hubs locally, secures partner

commitment to that change and develops a robust implementation process. The process will involve three stages:

1	Building consensus on the need for change	Using local data to understand the current local delivery of support for children, young people and families
2	Specifying a family hub approach	Developing a shared understanding of the model the partnership wishes to aspire to and its outcomes
3	Planning implementation	Testing readiness of the partnership to implement the model and planning implementation

- 3.5 The first two stages are underpinned by a theory of change approach which encapsulates why the change to a Family Hub model is necessary and the outcomes it aims to achieve. The final stage explores the extent to which the stakeholders are ready to make that change and develops a robust approach to implementation and evaluation against defined outcomes (focused on four areas of early intervention covering four key domains of child development: physical development, behavioural development, cognitive development, and social and emotional development).
- 3.6 These three steps ensure that the development of a local Family Hub model will have a sound evidence base and will be clearly defined and robustly implemented and evaluated.
- 3.7 According to the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) report, 'Planning early childhood services in 2020: learning from practice and research on children's centres and family hubs', the process of articulating the local approach through a theory of change allows local stakeholders to make explicit and considered choices about key service design issues. It allows local stakeholders to use the local assessment of community needs and contextual issues to create a bespoke approach to early childhood services, while retaining a focus on what developmental science tells us about the things children need to thrive; and a developed theory of change will reinforce the use of evidence and evaluation as part of creating a local strategy for early childhood services.
- 3.8 This whole-system approach is about effective delivery and ensuring children, young people and families can access services and support through a single access point. Developing a theory of change can help to ensure all stakeholders and service providers within a local Family Hub have a shared language for an integrated model of service provision and hold shared outcomes for the families they serve.
- 3.9 The whole-system approach for Family Hubs builds on a number of strategic developments in Wirral. It complements work in early help and prevention through the Early Help Alliance and Family Toolbox, it aligns with the Systemic Practice model being implemented by Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership, it will enhance the Supporting Families programme delivery, and can enhance the SEND Transformation Programme. In addition to this, the Family Hubs programme will

deliver against the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, enable further co-location and support the continued focus on reducing demand for acute, high-cost services.

- 3.10 Over recent months, the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCF) Reference Group of the Health and Wellbeing Board have been working in partnership with Wirral Council Officers to ensure that the initiative is linked with and supporting the ambition for Family and Community Hubs across the borough. The staffing resource for Family Hubs will form part of a wider network of staff and volunteers working towards this ambition. A Partnership Working Group has been established including the Director of Adult Health and Social Care, Director of Public Health, Associate Director of Transformation and Partnerships for NHS, Assistant Director for Children's Services and VCF Reference Group members.
- 3.11 Activity is planned through 4 phases: Envision, Engage, Transform, Optimise. Wirral is currently in the Envision phase which involves developing the Theory of Change, preparing the project team, developing a communications plan and a stakeholder engagement plan. This activity will be completed in the early spring when engagement with stakeholders, children, young people and families will become the priority, with potential Family Hub venues being identified.
- 3.12 The programme is due to be completed by 31 March 2024, at which point it is anticipated that Wirral will have a number of Family Hubs in operation, with a clear plan for further rollout.
- 3.13 It should be noted that the Department for Education are keen to learn about the process each local authority undertakes in developing its Family Hubs. Learning from across the seven local areas will be used to inform national developments and best practice models.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Wirral has been awarded £1m of Transformation Funding (TF1) from the Department for Education. The funding is 75% for revenue costs and 25% for capital expenditure. Funding will be provided during financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24, with an expectation that all funding is utilised by 31 March 2024. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between Wirral Council and the Department for Education.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the statutory requirements and responsibilities for the local authority and partners in providing support and services for children, young people and families. This legislation is underpinned by statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), which states that, "Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early." The family hubs programme will support Wirral Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities to meet need early.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Funding will provide capacity to facilitate this transformation programme, with two fulltime Best Start for Life Co-ordinators and one fulltime Programme Manager. This resource will be managed within Children's Services and will work alongside wider programmes such as Co-location Programme, Resilient Communities, Town Deal, and other linked initiatives.
- 6.2 The capital funding received through the grant will finance the anticipated costs to upgrade assets, ensuring that hubs (both physical and virtual) are accessible and inclusive.
- 6.3 Wirral is being supported by the National Family Hubs Network, Anna Freud Centre and has access to a Regional Family Hubs Advisor. Ecorys have been commissioned by the Department for Education to work with Wirral Council on the development of the Theory of Change model and ongoing evaluation.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 A multi-agency Steering Group has been established to maintain and oversee a risk register. Contract monitoring arrangements within the directorate and with the Department for Education are in place. Governance will be provided by the Partnership for Children, Young People and Families. The Department for Education has established a National Centre for Family Hubs and Wirral Council is supported by a Regional Co-ordinator.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 In applying for the Transformation Funding for family hubs, existing consultation and co-production activity was used to inform the submission. This included: engagement with 450 young people, parents and carers to understand how they want the early help system to deliver which led to the publication of Why Community Matters; the 3,000 young people who participated in the Youth Offer Review; and the parental engagement for the Early Years Strategy.
- 8.2 A programme of engagement and co-production activity will take place throughout the duration of the project, as per the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding and project plan. Parental and Family Voice Groups are key to the programme, with representation on the Steering Group. The programme team will undertake Co-Production training during their induction.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken alongside the Theory of Change model.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the delivery of the Family Hubs programme. It will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As detailed in Section 3, many community organisations are significant stakeholders in the early help and family help system. Wherever practicable, Wirral's approach to Family Hub development will support community organisations to benefit.

11.2 Fundamental to the Family Hubs programme is the importance of community. It is recognised that individuals and families will be more likely to sustain positive outcomes if they are living, with a sense of belonging, in a community where support, friendship and advice are easily available.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children, on behalf of DfE are the National Centre for Family Hubs have a dedicated space online for access to webinars, research, and information. <https://www.nationalcentreforfamilyhubs.org.uk/toolkits/the-family-hub-development-process/>

Early Intervention Foundation report [Planning early childhood services in 2020: learning from practice and research on children's centres and family hubs](#),

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Not applicable	Not applicable

