

Corporate Priorities:
Caring for the vulnerable;
Delivering Better Services

Family Hubs

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

Family hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs can include both physical locations and virtual offers, with a range of services for families with children of all ages, with a great Start for Life offer at their core.

The Family Hubs and Growing Up Well Digital programmes present many opportunities for working better together in partnership and, if they are to achieve significant positive benefits for children and families, need the support and engagement of partners and stakeholders from across the children's system.

Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- i) Note the proposals for Family Hubs in Lancashire and the associated Growing Up Well Digital programme
- ii) Consider the opportunities for working in partnership, including with local communities, to ensure that the potential benefits of the Family Hubs model are realised.

Background

Family hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs can include both physical locations and virtual offers, with a range of services for families with children of all ages, with a great Start for Life offer at their core.

There is evidence to show that a child's home environment, family stability and parent - child relationships are central to children and young people's development and their success in life. Local and national services have a vital role to play in supporting families with this 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.

A single gateway for family support services, such as family hubs, could improve join-up between organisations, offer a whole family approach, manage statutory pressures more effectively, reduce waiting times for early help interventions and ensure that families are offered support at the first time of asking.

Lancashire County Council has submitted a bid for £1m to the Department for Education for Transformation funding to support the establishment of a network of Family Hubs across the County. The outcome of the bid is expected to be known shortly after the local elections in May 2022.

If successful, the funding will run to March 2024, providing a project team and support to undertake consultation, engagement and design work at a local level across Lancashire to help move to a family hub model, including over 50 family hub buildings. The funding would include very little capital monies and would not cover the costs of family hub services themselves.

The core universal services that must be delivered as part of the model include:

- Midwifery: Support to parents to ensure a healthy birth
- Health visiting: Mandated health reviews and a focus on increasing uptake
- Infant feeding: Support and advice including networks and peer groups
- Mental health: Parent and carer access to mental health support
- Safeguarding: High quality safeguarding support, integrated in to services
- SEND: Special needs and disability services, integrated in to the wider offer.

Alongside these elements, Family Hubs should provide a clear offer of support to children and families across the 0-19 age range.

Lancashire has a firm vision, existing foundation and infrastructure from which to build our network of connected 'Family Hubs' comprising building based, outreach and digital offers. The key elements include:

- Family Hub Network: The virtual local network of joined up services
- Family Hub: A single access point for co-located and coordinated services for children, young people, and families
- Family Hub Bridge: A safe space for families providing brief interventions followed by introductions to local help and support
- Family Hubs Signpost: Information for families on physical and virtual local help and support
- Ambassadors: Local people who want to make a difference for families
- Crew: The local team making the changes happen.

The existing network of County Council Neighbourhood Centres could provide core elements of a physical Family Hub, with many centres already offering services from the Child and Family Wellbeing service and sessions delivered by partners. However, co-located building-based services is only part of the model, with potentially huge opportunities through the development of better links between services at a local level, including through digital solutions.

Alongside the proposed development of Family Hubs, a digital programme called "Growing Up Well" has been running since summer 2021. The Growing Up Well programme, supported by the Department for Education, has identified key information sharing "pain points" experienced by practitioners and is informing the development of national and local solutions which will help people to work better together. The research team identified the following as key issues to address:

- It can be difficult to identify and get in touch with the right professional and get in order to find out more about the family
- Professionals receive vague referrals with little contextual or background information, which means they need to do follow up 'detective work'.
- Practitioners can't easily access and share information between systems and services
- Records aren't always up to date on systems, especially phone numbers and addresses, which means that practitioners often have to find this out via other practitioners or agencies.

The Department for Education is working to develop and test out national solutions including a directory of practitioners and a referral tool which may help to address the first two issues above. Within Lancashire, a proof of concept has been undertaken to join up various datasets, including from our Early Help Teams, Children's Social Care and Education, to help inform a system wide-business case for the implementation of a digital Information Sharing Service. The final outputs from the proof of concept are expected in May 2022.

Each area of work outlined has seen really positive engagement from partners. Over 250 people joined a Family Hubs Theory of Change workshop in February 2022, to begin conversations about the model and how it could be taken forward. Similarly, the Growing Up Well programme has seen links between digital teams across our partnerships strengthened considerably, particularly from colleagues within the Integrated Care System NHS Digital Team and the Police.

The Family Hubs and the Growing Up Well Digital programmes present many opportunities for working better together in partnership and, if they are to achieve significant positive benefits for children and families, need the support and engagement of partners and stakeholders from across the children's system.

The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the proposals and consider the opportunities for opportunities for working in partnership, including with local communities, to ensure that the potential benefits of the Family Hubs model are realised.