

13 December 2023

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor P Seaman

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Children's Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Family Hub and Start for Life Programme

Is this a key decision?

No - although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

Executive Summary:

Coventry City Council currently operates 8 Family Hubs to deliver place-based integrated offer to families across the city, including the offer from the buildings, through an outreach model to communities and a developing digital offer.

Coventry City Council was selected in October 2023 to join the national Family Hub and Start for Life Programme with a financial investment to strengthen its offer to babies, children and families building on the achievements to date. We were successful in our application and were also awarded trailblazer status on 9.2.2023. Regular reports on this grant and the Family Hub and Start for Life programme are received by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children Services, and to the funders.

This programme awarded £4.27 million of grant funding across the 3 years 2022/23 to 2024/25 to deliver the programme objectives. This report includes an overview of the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme and the use of that funding across the Early Help Partnership. The report includes a description of key service deliverables to date, and our ambitions for the rest of the funded period, including proposals regarding the governance arrangements of this programme.

Recommendations:

The Board are asked to:

- 1) Note the progress to date of the Family Hub and Start for Life programme.
- 2) Advise on the future partnership governance of this programme.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

[The Family Hub and Start for Life programme Guide](#)

[HM Government : The Best Start for Life : A vision for the 1001 critical days](#)

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Family Hub and Start for Life Programme

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Family Hubs are a place-based way of joining up services locally in the planning and delivery of family services. They bring together services to improve access, build connections between families, practitioners, services and providers and put relationships at the heart of family support. Family hubs offer universal and targeted support to families with children of all ages up to 19 years and should provide support to families with young people with SEND up to 25 years. A comprehensive and effective Start for Life offer (0-2 years) must be at the core of the offer.
- 1.2 Coventry has pioneered the development and delivery of a Family Hub offer since 2018, and there are currently 8 Family Hubs delivering services to children, young people and their families through place based integrated working by a range of services, with some outreach and an emerging digital offer.
- 1.3 All families need support from time to time to help their babies and children thrive and the ambition of the national Family Hub and Start for Life Programme is that every family will receive the support when they need it and should have access to the information and guidance that they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children and to look after their own wellbeing. Investing in supporting families to care for their babies, children and young people has an important role to play in reducing health and educational inequalities, and improving their longer-term physical, emotional, cognitive and social outcomes.
- 1.4 Local services (public and the voluntary, community and faith sector), working together and in partnership *with* families, all have a vital role to play in supporting all families. Family Hubs are therefore positioned by the Government to be the universal offer to all families, with mandate to improve the joining up between state and non-state services and taking a whole family approach to better support families to access the help that they need.
- 1.5 The national funding received is ringfenced to enable the delivery of integrated family support for families with children of all ages, as well as Start for Life services (midwifery, health visiting, parent-infant relationships and mental health, breastfeeding, safeguarding, and SEND offer).
- 1.6 More specifically the funding must enhance the Family hub offer (building, outreach and digital offer) regarding parent- infant mental health support, infant feeding support services, evidence-based parenting programmes, to publish a clear “Start for Life offer” and ensure that parents’ and carers’ voices are heard in the design and delivery of services through Parent and Carer Panels. Workstreams with associated delivery plans and leaders from across the partnership have been established.
- 1.7 The sign-up application was completed on behalf of the wider partnership including Children Services, Public Health, the Health and Well Being Board, and the Integrated Care Board, in collaboration with a wide range of local partners across health systems, Council teams, education services and voluntary and community sector services.
- 1.8 The Family Hub programme guide sets the minimum and “go further” expectations for each of these offers, and as well as for the other services expected to be provided within a Family Hub offer (which are not additional funded). also indicated which of the “go further” Coventry commits to (across the three aspects of the services – in the building, within the community, and digitally) to be achieved by the end of the funded period.

- 1.9 Coventry was also successful in our trailblazer application (for Infant Feeding and Perinatal mental health/parent- infant relationship). Trailblazers were be expected to deliver visible, tangible changes for families in the 2022-2023 financial year, which will then be sustained and improved over the rest of the programme. Trailblazers will be expected to make the quickest and most ambitious and innovative progress in delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.
- 1.10 As a trailblazer we are also expected to share delivery experience and expertise with other local authorities and the government. Coventry supports the West Midlands Community of Practice and supports many LAs in their development of a Family Hub offer.
- 1.11 The Family Hub programme's objective is to join up and enhance services delivered through transformed family hubs, ensuring all parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it, with funding provided to enhance Coventry's family hub model, improve the universal Start for Life offer and support the continued transformation of family support. In summary the programme will:
- provide support to parents and carers so they can nurture their babies and children, improving health and education outcomes for all.
 - contribute to a reduction in inequalities in health and education outcomes for babies, children, and families across England by ensuring that support provided is communicated to all parents and carers, including those who are hardest to reach and/or most in need of it.
 - build the evidence base for what works when it comes to improving health and education outcomes for babies, children, and families in different delivery contexts.
- 1.12 Priorities for Coventry include:
- improving how local services share information and work together to provide holistic support for families, especially vulnerable families such as families with children with SEND, refugee and asylum-seeking families, and those not yet accessing services from our current Family Hubs.
 - ensuring that the Start for Life offer is clear, accessible, and seamless so all can access the help they need in a joined up offer.
 - embedding the voices of parents and carers to co-produce the Family Hub offer and influence the continuous improvement of the offer.
 - enhancing and expanding services which identify and address needs at an early stage before more specialist support is required.
 - ensuring additional targeted interventions which support vulnerable and under-served populations are included as part of the offer and delivered through the family hub offer.
 - supporting workforce capacity and capability through workforce models that incorporate skill mix, facilitating join-up of the multi-professional workforce to provide continuity of care to all families, improving multi-agency training, addressing existing skill gaps, and ensuring empathy is at the heart of practice.

- understanding what works and sharing best practice through robustly evaluating the Family Hub Offer against a set of measurable quantitative and qualitative objectives and contributing to the establishing of communities of practice.
- 1.13 Coventry is required to use the funding to commit to delivering visible change for families which include:
- clearly communicated expansion of our co-located services and expansion in our offer.
 - clear and enhanced opportunities for families to be involved in the co-design of family hubs through our Early Help advisory boards, governance, and in the delivery of services themselves, such as peer support programmes or mentoring schemes.
 - adaptations to our family hubs buildings to improve the environment and suitability for different ages and needs.
 - A virtual “front door” that provides 24/7 advice and support to families that provides access to a comprehensive and joined up offer.

2. Progress to date and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A Family Hub transformation programme team has been established and is led by Children services, as part of the delivery of the Early Help Strategy (2023-2025) and a comprehensive delivery plan is in place.
- 2.2 A Family Hub and Start for Life programme board currently oversees the work of each funded workstream, with workstream leads representing the partnership agencies and teams delivering on this programme. The Public Health Consultant responsible for inequalities and Children currently attends and supports this board.
- 2.3 Regular updates and reports are submitted to the Family Hub and Start for Life unit (Department of Education and Department of Health and Social Care) and quarterly data returns are also submitted on the reach of this programme children, young people and adults (parent/carers).
- 2.4 An outcome framework and logic model are in place that set out the ambitions for this programme for Coventry and is the basis of the internal evaluation of its impact.
- 2.5 Coventry is required to take part in a national evaluation, which is being undertaken by Ecroys, on behalf of the national team. A series of consultation and surveys are due to take place from January 2024 focusing on family experiences and satisfaction, and the workforce. There will also be a 2-day case study fieldwork visit early March 2024 to cover 2 hubs including observations of family activities, staff focus group interviews and family interviews.
- 2.6 Updates are regularly provided to the Children’s Senior leadership team on request, and to the cabinet member, Cllr Pat Seamen as agreed in the original cabinet and council report when approval to sign up to the programme was sought.
- 2.7 Headline progress is currently reported to the Early Help Strategic Partnership which is a subgroup of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership and is responsible for the oversight of the Early Help Strategy. Updates have also been provided to a range of partnership forums such as the LMNS, and the Children and Young People System group (Coventry and Warwickshire).

- 2.8 Given the level of funding and investment of this programme, and the scrutiny that this attracts, it is recommended that the governance arrangements are reviewed and amended to ensure that all parties that signed the funding application are sighted on the progress and can provide support to its ongoing success.
- 2.9 Currently there is a programme board which is chaired by the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme Lead, and attended by workstream leads which oversees the operational aspects of the programme. At this mid-point of the funded programme, it has been recognised that more strategic oversight should also be in place to oversee its progress and support the sustainability of the offer moving forwards.
- 2.10 After discussion with senior leaders within the partnership, it has been suggested that the governance for this programme could sit with the Health and Wellbeing Board as a partnership board that has the interest of all children in Coventry at its heart. It would therefore be helpful for board members to discuss whether they can provide this important programme with the governance it requires, and if so, the frequency of updates etc.

3. Timetable for implementing this decision.

- 3.1 It would be helpful to refresh and implement the new governance structures in time for the next financial year (2023-2024) which would then govern this programme until the end of the funded period which is currently end of March 2025.

4. Comments from Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer

4.1 Financial implications

- 4.2 The existing family hub model in Coventry is funded by a combination of core and grant funding, including Strengthening Families grant and contributions from Public Health.

- 4.3 This programme attracts grant funding of £4.27m across three years (2023-2025). The grant is allocated as per the conditions set and a MOU is in place:

Year	Programme	Capital	Parenting support	Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships*	Infant feeding*	Home learning environment (focus on CLL)	Parent Carer Panel & Start for Life offer
2022-2023	£209,100	£52,700	£134,800	£253,400	£155,200	£183,000	£52,500
2023-2024	£438,200	£76,200	£286,000	£529,900	£237,200	£153,900	£53,800
2024 - 2025	£222,300	£89,600	£286,000	£514,700	£254,500	£70,100	£26,500
Totals	£869,600	£218,500	£706,800	£1,298,000	£646,900	£407,000	£132,800

- 4.4 This grant is not intended to cover the operational costs of Family Hubs and Start for Life services. For family hub services that are not funded as part of the programme (as described in the programme guide), funding from existing funding sources need to be continued.

4.5 The grant regime requires two returns per financial year:

- An interim statement of grant usage that will detail on financial spend per funded service in the programme.
- An annual statement of grant usage at the end of the financial year that provides confirmation that expenditure was in line with the purposes specified in the grant determination letter.

Funding in years two and three is subject to satisfactory periodic review of delivery performance.

4.6 Funding is expected to be spent in the financial year for which it is allocated, and not carried forward. There are risks to the project in year 1, related to the commissioning and recruitment arrangements which require due diligence and time to be approved. Discussions are ongoing with partners and stakeholders to ensure that they can deliver as necessary with agility and pace.

4.7 A full and detailed project budget is in place as part of the delivery plan, against which project spend will be monitored. All required spend will be funded through the grant awarded and no match funding is required.

4.8 Careful consideration will need to be given to the action to be taken at the end of the grant regime, as this is time limited funding. If the grant ceases after the three years, then activity and provision will need to reduce back to levels that can be met within the existing budget envelop. However, the three-year timeframe gives opportunity to review and measure the impact of changes to service users during the project, and to incorporate best practice into the existing family hubs model when reviewing provision and delivery.

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 The work of family hubs and the proposals outlined in this report supports the City Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. The duty is a general duty to provide a range and level of services to Children in Need in the LAs area and not to a specific child.

6.0 Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>)

6.1.1 The Family Hub and Start for life programme supports the One Coventry Corporate Plan's vision to improve the quality of life for Coventry people by:

- Improving educational outcomes
- Making communities safer
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Protecting our most vulnerable people - Keeping children and adults safe from harm, providing early intervention for families who need it; Enabling people to exercise choice and control in their daily lives; Improving services for people experiencing domestic violence and Preventing homelessness and helping people who do become homeless
- Reducing health inequalities – giving our children the best start in life and helping support people facing multiple and complex needs.

The integration of services to support children, young people and their families is a way of delivering the Council's properties through active communities and empowering citizens and working together with partners across the voluntary, public and private sectors to:

- Enable residents to self-serve by maximising the use of new technology
- Pool and share resources
- Solve local problems

6.2 How is risk being managed?

- 6.2.1. The possibility of a failure to identify providers to deliver on each aspect of the funded programme is minimized as there is already Family Hubs in place with a range of agencies and service providers committed to the programme, and a wider early help partnership offer to draw from.
- 6.2.2 The risks associated with possible failure to deliver on the key priorities of the programme and the requirements of the grant are mitigated using expert personnel who are highly experienced in developing and delivering national programmes, and who will be supported and advised by personnel from the Family Hubs Start for Life Unit, DHSC.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Delivering effective prevention and early help for children and their families to secure positive outcomes is a significant priority for many functions of the City Council, including Children's Services, Safeguarding, Education, Migration, Employment and Skills and Public Health. The transformation and development of our Family Hub programme in alignment to the National programme specification will further improve the delivery of integrated early help and prevention services.

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken in 2018 at the commencement of the Coventry Family Hub programme.

The Family Hub and Start for Life Programme will provide city wide support to children, young people and families and will enhance the work to reduce inequalities and outcomes for children, young people, and their families in need of early help. The programme will prioritise engagement with vulnerable communities including those seldom heard or less reached including children with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking families, families experiencing homelessness, young carers, minoritized families and families living in poverty.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

There are no implications.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

A wide range of partner agencies (statutory, commissioned, and voluntary and community sector) take an active role in the Early Help Strategic Partnership which will provide the governance for this work, as a subgroup of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership. A One Coventry approach is taken by this Strategic Partnership.

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