

Local Members Interest
ALL

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 06 July 2021

Developing Family Hubs in Staffordshire

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the:

- a. Emerging national context for the development of Family Hubs across England.
- b. Emerging local strategic vision for the development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire.
- c. Future commissioning intentions in relation to Family Hubs, specifically in respect of Family Support Services and the Early Years Coordination Service (Children's Centres).
- d. Proposed incremental development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire through the development of an integrated model of working; and
- e. further development of Family Hubs and is considered by the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee within twelve months following public consultation.

Report of Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Summary

1. This Committee Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is intended to provide the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee with early details of the emerging vision for the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire, demonstrating how our ambitions for Family Hubs contribute to the delivery of the Families Strategic Partnership Children, Young People and Families Strategy, the Early Help Strategy and the development of the Place Based Approach for Children and Families.
2. The outcome of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee will directly inform the development of the emerging Family Hub Model and will be given due consideration by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet in September 2021. The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the development of the Family Hub Model within twelve months following public consultation.

Overview:

3. Evidence shows that a child's experiences from conception to five plays a critical role in their development, and that the early years represent an opportunity for families, policymakers and the economy to benefit longer term. We know that measurable gaps in outcomes between disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their peers can emerge early before children are two years of age and these are difficult and costly to close. In particular, the evidence is clear that a child's home environment, and parent-child relationships, are central to early development and there is a strong financial case for providing Early Help at this age to prevent later more costly support.
4. Some families need extra help and support to understand their role as a parent/carer and enable them to be independent longer term. Sometimes families struggle to understand who is there to support them and get lost within a complex service landscape 're-telling their story' to different services. Family Hubs are a way in which we can improve how national and local services are coordinated and delivered to vulnerable and disadvantaged families with children aged from conception to nineteen. While the pandemic provides a challenging backdrop, it has also sharpened awareness of how some disadvantaged and vulnerable families risk being left behind and has encouraged local agencies to explore greater integration and enhanced partnership working which we plan to build on.
5. To support our strategic ambitions for children, young people and families, Staffordshire County Council is seeking to work together with families and partners across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sectors to develop Family Hubs, which ensure families, with children aged 0-19, have access to the right help, at the right time. The emerging development of Family Hubs can help families access and navigate services and receive a joined-up, holistic experience where they don't have to constantly re-tell their story. The development of Family Hubs will involve active partnerships across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sectors in Staffordshire.

Background:

6. Staffordshire is a great place to live. Most children are happy, safe and have loving homes, but there are some families who face challenges that mean they cannot thrive in the way they want to.
7. At all stages in their lives we want Staffordshire's families to lead their best life possible. We have a clear vision where: "Families and communities have the strength, skills and knowledge they need to ensure their children and young people are healthy, happy, safe and achieve their potential."
8. We want to see children, young people and families who are supported to:
 - a. Start Well: every child has the best possible start in life to reduce differences in the quality of their health and wellbeing in the future.

- b. Grow Well: children and young people are supported to reach their potential so that they can have greater control over their lives.
 - c. Live Well: children, young people and adults are supported to make good lifestyle choices.
9. Children, young people and families have said they don't want to be in systems. They want to be supported by people they trust, their friends and families and to resolve the day-to-day challenges they face.
 10. Supporting families is not about 'doing it for them'. It's about enabling families to find their own solutions to challenges and to give them the tools they need to continue with the positive changes they make. We want to encourage families and communities to make use of the support they have around them, help each other and be able to tackle problems using the strengths they have.
 11. From time to time, some families will need early help, and a few will need statutory services and intervention. Where it is required, this input from services will be effective and timely, helping families to get back on track and to stop their situation worsening.
 12. Children, families and communities in Staffordshire benefit from good services, provisions and activities which are facilitated across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sector. These are accessed by the all, the some and the few. We also know that the majority of our children and families are supported by their communities who have their roots in local neighbourhoods and villages and are therefore well-placed to both provide support to families with relative informality and to apply a practical approach to meeting needs.
 13. However, children, families and communities tell us it can be challenging to navigate our complex systems, structures and delivery processes which can sometimes prevent children and families getting the right information, advice, guidance and help at the right time.
 14. To overcome these challenges, and to support our strategic ambitions for children, young people and families, Staffordshire County Council is seeking to work together with partners across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sectors to develop Family Hubs, which ensure families have access to the right help, at the right time.

National Context:

15. Many publications have highlighted the significance of the period from conception to age two, outlining the need for action to improve support for families during this period and beyond. These include:
 - a. Building Great Britons', published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Conception to Age 2 – The First 1001 Days in February 2015.
 - b. 'Evidence-based Early Years Intervention', published by the Science and Technology Select Committee in November 2018.

- c. 'Tackling Disadvantage in the Early Years', published by the Education Select Committee in February 2019.
 - d. 'First 1000 Days of Life', published by the Health and Social Care Select Committee in February 2019
 - e. 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review)', published by University College London in 2016 and 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On', published by University College London in February 2020
 - f. 'Lockdown Babies', published by the former Children's Commissioner in May 2020
 - g. 'Best Beginnings in the Early Years', published by the former Children's Commissioner in July 2020
 - h. 'Out of Routine: A Review of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) in Families Where the Children are Considered at Risk of Significant Harm', published by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in July 2020
 - i. 'Babies in Lockdown', published by Best Beginnings, the Home Start Foundation and the Parent Infant Foundation in August 2020
 - j. In November 2020, HRH the Duchess of Cambridge and the Royal Foundation published '5 Big Questions' at the conclusion of a nationwide tour, survey and open online questionnaire
 - k. 'Working for Babies: Lockdown Lessons from Local Systems', published by the 'First 1,001 Days Movement' in January 2021
 - l. The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report, published by the Department for Health and Social Care in March 2021
16. The Government's 2019 Manifesto pledged to champion Family Hubs across England. In December 2020 the Minister for Children, Vicky Ford, set out plans to create a National Centre of Excellence for Family Hubs, funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
17. A further announcement was made in May 2021, by the Education Secretary, to announce that the Anna Freud Centre would run the National Centre of Excellence, whose role would be to champion Family Hubs, spread best practice and evidence on integrated family service models and work with areas to help them set up and deliver world-leading models of support for families from conception to nineteen.
18. The vision set out by the Minister for Children has been further endorsed by the Department of Health and Social Care's Early Years Healthy Development Review, which recommended the nationwide development of Family Hubs. This vision endorsed the development of Family Hubs to be welcoming, family-focused centres for every new family during pregnancy and beyond.

19. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Care are seeking for Family Hubs, through integrated models of delivery, to improve access, range and quality of services, activities and provisions across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sectors to give families the best start in life by providing the right support, at the right time. Family Hubs will work together with families from the early years of children's lives and in the years following, by improving families access to vital services.
20. Effective integrated working along with Early Help can improve children's wellbeing, educational attainment and life chances, reduce family poverty, improve mental health and lead to lower crime, unemployment and other negative outcomes which carry significant cost to the public purse. The integrated Family Hub model enables easier access to support, better outcomes for families, more effective service delivery and smarter use of budgets.

Local Context:

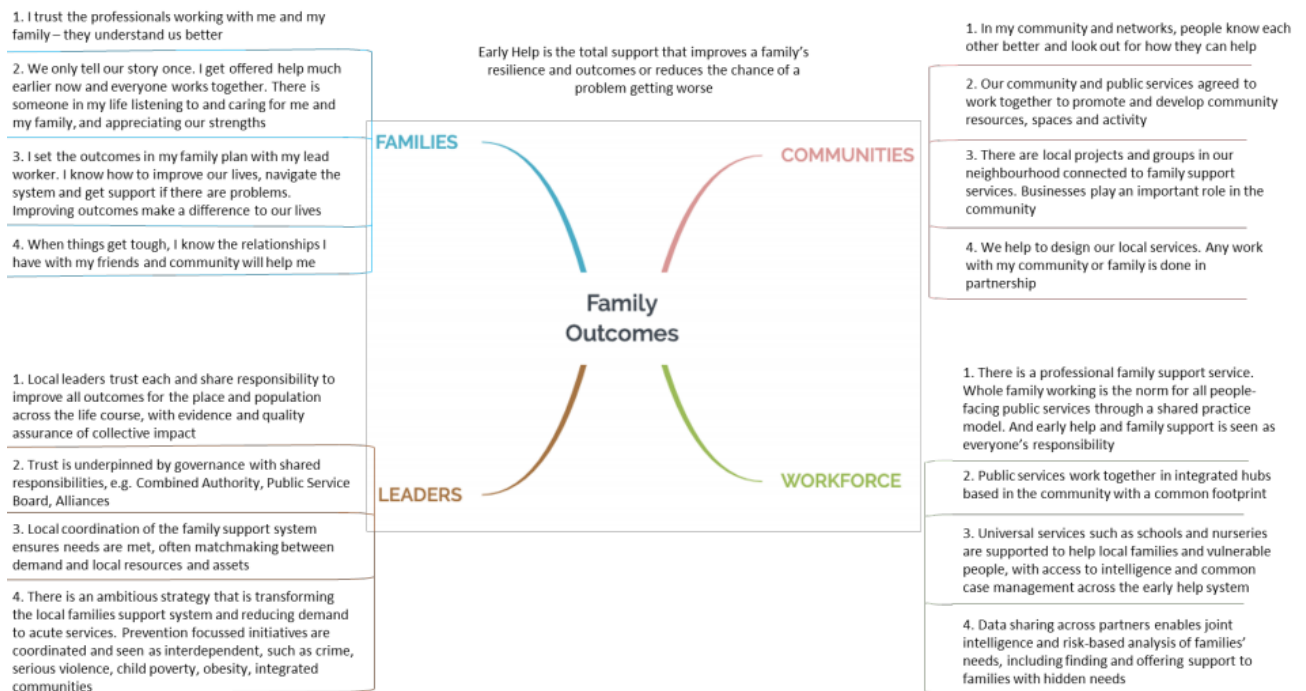
21. There are 168,935 children and young people aged 0-19 years across Staffordshire, an area which spans 1,010 square miles. Children, families and communities already benefit from a range of services offered across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sectors in the county. We have an existing network of Children's Centres; a universal, digital reach via Staffordshire Connects and a broad portfolio of commissioned and in-house services which offer information, advice, guidance and support to families.
22. Staffordshire has a well-developed existing network of Children's Centres which currently focus provision on the Early Years. This network of Children's Centres, operated through the Early Years Coordination Service, seeks to deliver a seamless integrated service within communities in relation to the Early Years. The delivery of Staffordshire's Children's Centres is underpinned by the Children Centre Statutory Guidance.
23. The statutory guidance states that Local Authorities are required to consult with families if they plan to make changes to the delivery of the Children's Centre Services. As such we are seeking support to engage in a period of consultation with families to develop the Children's Centres into Family Hubs with a broader age remit and offer of holistic placed based support working with partners.
24. The Family Hubs will be a core component of our Place Based Approach. This approach seeks to ensure that families are able to access the right support, at the right time, within their local communities, increasing families' resilience and preventing needs from escalating.
25. Family Hubs build upon our existing offer, providing both a virtual and a physical space seeking to support our ambitions by creating, as far as possible, a seamless integrated service within communities, where families need to tell their story only once and can then access joined-up support, as part of an holistic offer, which helps to address their needs early.

26. We have a strong base upon which to build a robust and effective Family Hub delivery model, which will make it easier for families to access the help they need and avoid them struggling to navigate complex delivery structures.
27. We are committed to investing in and working together to deliver effective early help for families, as outlined in our Early Help Strategy. The Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC) programme is Staffordshire's response to the Government's Supporting Families initiative (previously known as Troubled Families). A key driver of the programme is to develop and transform the approach to early help. BRFC is delivered through locality-based partnership working, takes a whole-family approach, focusses on early intervention and prevention and aims to build lasting, sustainable resilience in families and communities.

Emerging Strategic Vision for Development of Family Hubs

28. Our emerging vision for Family Hubs is to build upon and develop from the existing strong base of provision which we have in Staffordshire. We will work with partners to seek opportunities to bring services together and align the support offers that are available, so that families have access to the help they need, when they need it, in the communities where they live.
29. It is anticipated that the development of Family Hubs will build upon Children's Centres, which will be redesignated Family Hubs in line with the emerging strategic vision.
30. We aim to develop a Staffordshire Family Hub model which:
 - a. Brings together a range of provision into a coherent, connected and accessible offer to families around a local place. This will support them to achieve and maintain positive outcomes and seek to prevent needs from escalating.
 - b. Places a focus on early help and prevention with the communities of Staffordshire.
 - c. Takes a whole-family approach and is available to families with children aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with SEND), providing services for the all, the some and the few; and
 - d. Has a physical presence within a community as well as an online offer and maximises the use of existing resources within a locality, as part of our Place Based Approach.
 - e. Adopts a Restorative Practice Model, which seeks to build and maintain healthy relationships and a sense of community.
31. Through the development of the Family Hub Model, we are seeking to build upon the Early Help Systems Guide, developed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, MHCLG. This Guide outlines MHCLG's vision for the early help landscape and has been informed by over 10 years work in delivering the national Supporting Families programme. This has evidenced a number of factors

which contribute towards delivering improved outcomes and preventing problems from getting worse. The model is outlined in the diagram below.



Families:

- I trust the professionals working with me and my family – they understand us better.
- We only tell our story once. I get offered help much earlier now and everyone works together. There is someone in my life listening to and caring for me and my family and appreciating our strengths.
- I set the outcomes in my family plan with my lead worker. I know how to improve our lives, navigate the system and get support if there are problems. Improving outcomes make a difference to our lives.
- When things get tough, I know the relationships I have with my friends and community will help me.

Communities:

- In my community and networks, people know each other better and look out for how they can help.
- Our community and public services agreed to work together to promote and develop community resources, spaces and activity.
- There are local projects and groups in our neighbourhood connected to family support services. Businesses play an important role in the community.

- We help to design our local services. Any work with my community or family is done in partnership.

Workforce:

- There is a professional family support service. Whole family working is the norm for all people-facing public services through a shared practice model. And early help and family support is seen as everyone's responsibility.
- Public services work together in integrated hubs based in the community with a common footprint.
- Universal services such as schools and nurseries are supported to help local families and vulnerable people, with access to intelligence and common case management across the early help system.
- Data sharing across partners enables joint intelligence and risk-based analysis of families' needs, including finding and offering support to families with hidden needs.

Leaders:

- Local leaders trust each and share responsibility to improve all outcomes for the place and population across the life course, with evidence and quality assurance of collective impact.
 - Trust is underpinned by governance with shared responsibilities, e.g. Combined Authority, Public Service Board, Alliances.
 - Local coordination of the family support system ensures needs are met, often matchmaking between demand and local resources and assets.
 - There is an ambitious strategy that is transforming the local families support system and reducing demand to acute services. Prevention focussed initiatives are coordinated and seen as interdependent, such as crime, serious violence, child poverty, obesity, and integrated communities.
32. Over the Summer 2021, we are seeking to work together with stakeholders to further develop the Early Help Systems Guide to reflect the local context of Staffordshire and the needs of our children, young people and families to inform a report to Cabinet in September 2021.
33. Access to the Family Hub will not be dependent upon a formal assessment. Formal assessments will be undertaken where appropriate in relation to the level of need.

Future Commissioning Intentions

Family Support

34. As a key component of our early help offer, Family Support was commissioned on a countywide basis, but with a locality footprint. In line with the Place Based

Approach, commissioners worked with the VCSE to develop the community and voluntary sector market in localities. This resulted in local community organisations being commissioned to deliver whole-family tier 2 support, which joins up services around the family to tackle root causes.

35. Family Support delivers across a range of outcomes identified and works alongside families to engender positive outcomes. They do this by increasingly growing the family's ability to manage themselves within their own community, so that they know where to turn to in times of difficulty. The commissioned Family Support services make a significant contribution to our achievement of the targets set for us by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to the BRFC programme.
36. We performance manage service delivery and monitor demand for the service. Our monitoring indicates that there continues to be a need for this service provision across the county.
37. The current investment into the Family Support Service contract is circa £2 million per annum. This includes Staffordshire County Council investment of £700,000 and external funding from our Building Resilient Families and Communities budget. We are seeking to invest BRFC money for 21/22, but this is subject to an MHCLG decision regarding the continuation of this funding beyond March 2022.
38. Based on previous years' performance, we anticipate that external funding will be required to meet the demand expectations for the service. We will continue to work with partners to explore other contributions, as it is a service that contributes to a range of outcomes.
39. The existing commissioned Family Support contract comes to an end in March 2022. Commissioners are seeking to undertake activity to commission community based early help support beyond March 2022. The commissioners intend to work together with Partners to develop a service specification which allows for flexibility in provision and methods of delivery, so that the service can be adapted to align with the emerging Family Hub model.
40. The Family Support Service will continue to embed the Restorative Practice Model.

Children's Centres/Early Years Coordination Service:

41. The core purpose of Children's Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:
 - a. Child development and school readiness.
 - b. Parenting aspirations and parenting skills
 - c. Child and family health and life chances.
42. Children's Centres have adopted a model of working which enables integrated working around the family through greater collaboration across a partnership to meet the needs of families and their young children more effectively. Children's Centre delivery is closely aligned with a range of key priorities, programmes and

services, including Children's Public Health and the Building Resilient Families and Communities Programme (BRFC).

43. In Staffordshire, we have worked hard to deliver this model of working and there have been significant improvements most notably:
 - a. Prior to COVID-19, more families in Staffordshire were accessing Children's Centres and the services available both from the Centre, within the community and in the family home.
 - b. Governance has improved significantly and is operating effectively offering both support and challenge to deliver more effective outcomes for families locally, through a multi-agency approach.
 - c. Over 319 volunteers have been recruited and support the Centre's through the delivery of administration support, community communicators, administration support, data collection, caretaking, event planning and marketing. Two have been recognised this year for their contribution as volunteers through Support Staffordshire Volunteer Awards.
 - d. The Good Level of development in Staffordshire continues to rise and is above the national average where the majority of children are now starting school ready to learn and achieving a Good Level of Development.
44. The Children's Commissioner (2020) noted that the Evaluation of Children's Centres in England study found that using Children's Centres had a beneficial effect on parent/carer-child relationships, parental stress and the home learning environment. Considering this, Staffordshire's Children's Centres, through its integrated approach, play a fundamental role in a child's development because of the focus on the most disadvantaged families. This makes a vital contribution to the reduction of inequalities in; child development and school readiness, supported by improving; parenting aspiration, self-esteem and parenting skills and child and family health and life chances.
45. Whilst it is anticipated that Children's Centres will form the foundation of the emerging Family Hub Model, the staffing model that is in place will need to be further developed to support the evolving role of the Family Hub.
46. The management of Children's Centres is currently facilitated through a commissioned Early Years Coordination Service working together with the Internal Children and Families Business Support Service with contractual arrangements due to come to an end in March 2022.
47. Prior to April 2022, it is therefore proposed to work together with key stakeholders to undertake a review of the Early Years Coordination Service and the Internal Children and Families Business Support Service (in connection to Children's Centres) to develop a model which ensures the continued delivery of the Children's Centre Core Offer, whilst developing an integrated infrastructure for the emerging Family Hub.

48. We will develop a full options appraisal for the core staffing structure which will deliver the Family Hub aspirations.

Proposed Phased Development of the Family Hub Model

49. The National Centre of Excellence for Family Hubs will continue to develop and the model in Staffordshire will evolve over time in line with this work. This will allow us to take into account emerging best practice and the growing evidence base.

50. While this work is progressing, there are a number of short to medium-term priorities which we will need to progress. This will result in a phased approach to the development of the Family Hub model.

51. The first phase will involve the recommissioning the Family Support Service and the redesign of the Early Years Coordination Service to reflect the emerging vision relating to Family Hubs.

52. Subsequent phases will develop this approach and build upon work taking place both locally and nationally. These phases are still in development and will involve engaging with partners, ongoing commissioning activity and developing our approach to supporting families across the county, but will include the integration of:

- a. Birth Registrations
- b. Children and Families Health and Wellbeing Services
- c. Early Years Services
- d. Family Support Services
- e. Parenting Support Services
- f. Integrated Financial Capability Services
- g. Training and Employment information and advice
- h. Voluntary and community activities, provisions and services.

Link to Strategic Plan

The work with regard to Family Hubs contributes to the strategic priorities:

- Support more families and children to look after themselves, stay safe and well
- Inspire healthy and independent living

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

[The National Family Hub Centre of Excellence](#)

[The Early Help Systems Guide](#)

[The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report, Department for Health and Social Care](#)

[The Best Beginnings in the Early Years](#)

[Children's Centres Statutory Guidance](#)

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