

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 September 2021

Developing Family Hubs in Staffordshire



Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

“In recent years this County Council has devoted a great deal of effort to providing help and support for families how and where they wanted it, rather than imposing a universal approach.

Now, working together with other organisations, this next development will offer a more streamlined approach for families seeking a little help and advice.

It will provide them with the support they need for children to have more opportunity in life, helped by their friends, families and communities.”

Report Summary:

This report provides Cabinet with the vision for the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire. It demonstrates how our ambitions for Family Hubs will contribute to the delivery of the Families Strategic Partnership’s Children, Young People & Families Strategy, the Early Help Strategy and be at the heart of the Place Based Approach for Children and Families.

Family Support is an integral element of the Family Hub Model, ensuring that families receive early support to prevent needs from escalating. This report also provides Cabinet with details of the proposed re-commissioning of a Family Support Service and Outreach Service as the current contract ends on 31st March 2022.

We are seeking the support of Cabinet to enter a period of formal public consultation to develop our Children’s Centres into Family Hubs and work with families and partners to develop Staffordshire’s future offer.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorses the strategic vision for the development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire, approving a period of public consultation and engagement in respect of the redesignation of Children’s Centres as Family Hubs.
- b. Subject to public consultation, endorses the design and subsequent phased implementation of Family Hubs across Staffordshire as an integrated model of working, whilst acknowledging the future commissioning intentions in relation to the Family Support and Outreach Service and the Early Years Coordination Service (Children’s Centres).

- c. Approves the procurement of a Family Support and Outreach Service, delegating decisions, including acting on behalf of Staffordshire County Council (the County Council) to enter the required contractual arrangements, to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- d. Delegates authority to make decisions in relation to the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire, including future decisions in relation to the Early Years Coordination Service, to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 15 September 2021

Developing Family Hubs in Staffordshire

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorses the strategic vision for the development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire, approving a period of public consultation and engagement in respect of the redesignation of Children’s Centres as Family Hubs.
- b. Subject to public consultation, endorses the design and subsequent phased implementation of Family Hubs across Staffordshire as an integrated model of working, whilst acknowledging the future commissioning intentions in relation to the Family Support and Outreach Service and the Early Years Coordination Service (Children’s Centres).
- c. Approves the procurement of a Family Support and Outreach Service, delegating decisions, including acting on behalf of Staffordshire County Council (the County Council) to enter the required contractual arrangements, to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- d. Delegates authority to make decisions in relation to the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire, including future decisions in relation to the Early Years Coordination Service, to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities

Introduction:

1. 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.
2. 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.” 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.
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 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.
 4. The evidence is clear that a child's parent is their primary educator, but some parents need help to develop the home environment and parent to child relationships. This can impact on a child's early development and there is a strong financial case for providing Early Help at this age to prevent later more costly support.
 5. Some families need extra help and support to enable them to be independent longer term, but 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, their community to resolve the day-to-day challenges they face.
 6. Families also tell us that it can be challenging to navigate their way around the help and support available. They can find themselves 're-telling their story'. This can sometimes prevent children and families getting the right information, advice, guidance and help at the right time.
 7. 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. It also provides an opportunity to take a different approach to intervening to prevent later demand.
 8. 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.
 9. To support our strategic ambitions for children, young people and families, the 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 and those up to 25 with a disability, have access to the right help, at the right time.
 10. The Family Hubs are a government commitment to 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.

National Context:

11. There has been much research which has 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. A list of relevant research documents can be found in **Appendix 1**.
12. 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).
13. A further announcement was made in May 2021, by the Education Secretary, to announce that the Anna Freud Centre will facilitate the National Centre of Excellence, whose role is to be a champion for Family Hubs, spreading 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.
14. In August 2021, the DfE set out plans to elevate its Family Hubs programme, backed by £20m of new funding, that will support councils to set up new Family Hubs across England. The County Council is awaiting opportunities to seek to benefit from this funding.
15. The vision set out by the Minister for Children has been further endorsed by the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) 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.
16. The DfE and the DHSC are seeking for Family Hubs, through integrated models of delivery, to improve access, the 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, provisions and activities.
17. 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:

18. There are circa 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, provisions and activities 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.
21. The Family Hubs will be a core component of our Place Based Approach. This approach seeks to ensure that families can access the right support, at the right time, within their local communities, increasing families' resilience and preventing needs from escalating.
22. 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 a holistic offer, which helps to address their needs early.
23. 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.
24. We are committed to investing in and working together to deliver effective early help for families, as outlined in our Early Help Strategy. Our ambition for Family Hubs supports this commitment. 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.

Strategic Vision for Development of Family Hubs

25. We are seeking to ensure “Across Staffordshire, families access seamless support through Local Multi-Agency Family Hubs, empowering them to grow local networks of support to develop the strength, skills and knowledge they need to ensure they are healthy, happy, safe and achieve their potential.”
26. Our Family Hubs will 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.
27. It is anticipated that the development of Family Hubs will build upon Children’s Centres, which want to coproduce this with families to create a sustainable model for the future.
28. We aim to develop a Staffordshire Family Hub model which brings together a range of provision into a coherent, connected, and accessible offer to families around a local place. This will:
 - a. Support families to achieve and maintain positive outcomes and seek to prevent needs from escalating firstly through effective information, advice and guidance.
 - b. Place a focus on early help and prevention with the communities of Staffordshire.
 - c. Take 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. Have 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.
29. 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). The Guide has been developed to support the ambitions of the Supporting Families programme, which aims to transform the early help system. Locally, we use the Guide to inform the ongoing development of the BRFC programme and to shape our approach to early help.
30. The Guide outlines MHCLG’s vision for the early help landscape and has been informed by over ten years’ work in delivering the national Supporting Families programme. This work has evidenced several factors which contribute towards delivering improved outcomes and preventing problems from getting worse. Within the Early Help System Guide these are scoped across four domains: Families, Communities, Leaders and Workforce. The Early Help System model is outlined in the diagram in **Appendix 2**.

Future Commissioning Intentions

Family Support and Outreach Service

31. The Family Support Service delivers whole-family early help support. As a key component of our early help offer, it joins up services around the family to tackle root causes. Family Support works alongside families to support positive outcomes. It focuses on growing the family's ability to self-manage 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 MHCLG in relation to the BRFC programme.
32. The Family Support Service was commissioned on a countywide basis, but with a locality footprint. In line with the Place Based Approach, commissioners worked with partners to develop the community and voluntary sector market in localities. This resulted in six (6) local VCSE organisations being commissioned to deliver the service across the county, with each District having a local offer, but with consistency in quality across the County.
33. The current investment into the Family Support Service contract is circa £2 million per annum. This includes a County Council investment of £700,000 and external funding from BRFC which is subject to MHCLG's continuation of the Supporting Families Programme.
34. We performance manage service delivery and monitor demand for the service. The current service is delivering positive outcomes for families. Over the last financial year (20 / 21), the service has supported over 1,400 families and contributed to the achievement of our MHCLG targets. Our monitoring indicates that there continues to be a need for this service provision across the county, as referrals from a range of sources e.g. schools, social workers etc. continues to be high.
35. The existing commissioned Family Support contract comes to an end in March 2022, with no option to extend within procurement regulations. Therefore, Commissioners have consulted with partners to develop a service specification to ensure that we continue to support families across Staffordshire and that there is no gap in provision. This specification aims to commission a new contract at £1.8 million per year for a maximum of 5 years.
36. The specification contains three core elements for a Family Support and Outreach Service:
 - a. Referral-Based Family Support – offering early help to families to prevent needs from escalating and equipping the family with the skills needed to achieve and sustain positive outcomes.
 - b. Targeted Outreach Visits – focused on those families with young children who may benefit from information, advice, guidance and signposting into local community resources and assets (e.g. accessing their childcare entitlement).
 - c. Support to access Community Support, Groups and Universal Offers – offering practical hands-on support to enable families who would not normally access

group offers, to help them engage with available resources and support within their community.

37. The specification allows for flexibility in provision and methods of delivery, so that the service can be adapted to align with the emerging Family Hub model. The overarching aim of all elements of the service is to support the family to develop the resilience needed to manage future challenges. This will result in families being independent and in future only needing to access support within their own network and local community.
38. We have funding allocated within the current BRFC budget to pay for this contract to 2022/23. However, we anticipate that external funding will be required if we are to meet demand beyond 2022/23. The continuation of additional BRFC funding to cover beyond 2022/23 will be subject to an MHCLG decision. In addition to BRFC funding, a contribution will be made from the Resettlement Integration and Independence Support Grant. We will continue to work with partners to explore other contributions, as it is a service that contributes to a range of outcomes.

Children's Centres and the Early Years Coordination Service:

39. 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.
40. 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).
41. 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 than ever before.
 - b. Governance has improved significantly and now offers support and challenge to deliver more effective outcomes for families locally, through a multi-agency approach.
 - c. More than 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. However, one in four children start school behind their peers and the evidence suggests that they never catch up.
42. 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, parenting skills, child and family health and life chances.
43. 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.
44. 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 (Children's Centres).
45. Before 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. Subject to Cabinet approval, this review will be subject to formal consultation.
46. We will develop a full options appraisal for the core staffing structure which will deliver the Family Hub aspirations. This will explore all available options to the County Council, including an internal and commissioned model of delivery.

Proposed Phased Development of the Family Hub Model

47. 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 consider emerging best practice and the growing evidence base.
48. While this work is progressing, there are 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.
49. The first phase will involve recommissioning the Family Support and Outreach Service and the redesign of the Early Years Coordination Service and the Internal

Children and Families Business Support Service (Children's Centres) to reflect the emerging vision relating to Family Hubs.

50. Subsequent phases will be dependent upon the outcome of the County Council engagement activity. It is anticipated that the development of this approach will 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.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

51. The contract value of the Family Support and Outreach Service will be £1.8 million per year, with a total contract value of £9 million (over a maximum of 5 years).
52. We have funding allocated within the current BRFC budget to contribute to the Family Support and Outreach Service contract to 22/23. However, we anticipate that external funding will be required if we are to meet anticipated demand beyond 2022/23. The continuation of additional BRFC funding to cover beyond 2022/23 will be subject to an MHCLG decision. In addition, we will continue to work with partners to explore other contributions, as it is a service that contributes to a range of outcomes.
53. Should BRFC funding be unavailable for the Family Support and Outreach Service in future years, the County Council will undertake a review to consider future delivery options through the reconfiguration of available resources.
54. We have also secured additional funding from the Resettlement, Integration and Independence Support Grant to contribute to the Family Support and Outreach Service in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. This contribution reflects the role of the Service in contributing to a wide range of improved outcomes for children and families across Staffordshire.
55. It is anticipated that the development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire will build upon existing services, provisions and activities. It is therefore anticipated that the County Council will seek to reconfigure existing financial arrangements to underpin the development of Family Hubs, maximising existing resources. It is also anticipated that the Family Hubs will operate within existing Children's Centre property assets and will not require additional capital investment.

Legal Implications

56. The Family Support and Outreach Service will be commissioned in line with the County Council's internal Procurement Regulations and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
57. The County Council's statutory duties in respect of Children's Centres, as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, will be delivered through the proposed network of Family Hubs. This includes:
 - a. The duty to secure sufficient Children's Centres to meet local need, so far as this is reasonably practicable.
 - b. The duty to secure that each children's centre is within the remit of an advisory board and a governing body.
 - c. The duty to consider whether early childhood services should be delivered through one of the children's centres in the area.
58. The County Council is required under Section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006 to facilitate appropriate consultation in respect of the significant changes made to services in respect of Children's Centres. Due to the significant changes proposed in respect of the development of Family Hubs, the County Council will be required to undertake a period of consultation and engagement to ensure compliance with Section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006. This is only required in respect of changes to Children's Centres and therefore the County Council will exceed the minimum consultation requirements.
59. Whilst the development of Family Hubs is a significant change in respect of Children's Centres, the County Council is not seeking to remove and/or close any Children's Centre within the county.
60. In addition to the above, the development of Family Hubs will also contribute to the delivery of a range of statutory duties, including those set out in the Children Act (1989), Children Act (2004) and the Health and Social Care Act (2012).

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Oversight

61. The development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire was considered by Members of the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6th July 2021.
62. The Committee welcomed the development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire, acknowledging the emerging national and local strategic context. The Committee endorsed the future commissioning intentions in relation to Family Hubs, specifically in respect of Family Support & Outreach Services and the Early Years Coordination Service (Children's Centres).
63. The Committee expressed the importance of the COVID-19 Recovery with a focus on Early Years, and the importance of ensuring children, families and communities get the right support, information, advice and guidance at the right time. The Committee also recognised the importance of ensuring the Family Hubs build upon the existing Children's Centre Offer.

64. The Committee also endorsed the incremental development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire through the development of an integrated model of working, inviting further consideration of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Conclusion

65. The County Council will work with Partners and stakeholders to facilitate a phased development of Family Hubs across Staffordshire through the development of an integrated model of working.

66. The County Council will work 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.

67. Decisions in relation to the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire, including future decisions in relation to the Early Years Coordination Service, will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

68. The County Council will facilitate an appropriate procurement exercise in relation to the Family Support and Outreach Service, in accordance with the County Council's internal Procurement Regulations and the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Decisions, including entering the required contractual arrangements, will be taken by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Publications regarding importance of Early Years

Appendix 2 - Early Help System Guide

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Natasha Moody, Assistant Director for Commissioning

Report Author: Joseph Sullivan
Job Title: Senior Commissioning Manager
Telephone No.: 07866 913434
E-Mail Address: joseph.sullivan@staffordshire.gov.uk

Report Author: Becky Murphy
Job Title: Senior Commissioning Manager
Telephone No.: 07773 062621
E-Mail Address: becky.murphy@staffordshire.gov.uk