

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 05 March 2024

Report Title

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update on the progress of the transformation project associated with the Family Hubs & Start for Life grant and follows a previous update to Improving Lives Select Commission in March 2023.

The grant was made available to Rotherham from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) as one of 75 Local Authorities that was pre-selected.

The funding is predominantly for transformation activities (with just 5% ring fenced for capital adjustments & upgrades to existing buildings).

Preparatory work commenced on this project in the second half of 2022, preparing initial plans and submissions to the DfE. Funded work has been in operation since early 2023, when the first tranche of grant funding was received, which has resulted in progress across all the funded strands of the programme and the overall transformation project for establishing Family Hubs in our Children's Centres. The funded strands are set out below:

- Family hubs transformation/ digital offer
- Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships
- Parenting support
- Infant feeding support
- Home learning environment support

- Publishing a start for life offer
- Establishing a parent carer panel

A further 13 months of funded work will support the completion of the transformation project at end of March 2025, and leave behind a legacy of an improved offer for Rotherham's families, offering families a better start and improving support to children and young people.

This legacy will be more joined up planning and delivery of family help and support services to improve access, connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and to put relationships at the heart of family support.

The report provides a broad overview of progress, and the slides (Appendix 5) will be presented to give more detail.

Recommendations

1. That Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note the progress made to date in the use of the grant to transform family help and support services.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - Minutes of Health and Wellbeing Board (link in Council Committee etc)

Appendix 2 - Family Hubs website external users (not including RMBC)

Appendix 3 - Cabinet Report – dated 13th February 2023

Appendix 4 - Cabinet Report – dated 16th October 2023

Appendix 5 – Slides - overview

Background Papers

Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme Guide August 22

[Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Update

1. Background

- 1.1 The Improving Lives Select Commission received a previous update on the Family Hubs and Start for Life funded programme in March 2023, shortly after Cabinet accepted the grant funding and approved the Rotherham proposed approach (February 2023). The funding amounted to an additional investment of around £3.4m in three tranches, covering part of the last quarter of 2022/23 and the two following years, and almost all intended for transformational effort to add value to existing provision. This further update therefore summarises all the additional value so far achieved, as the project was in its infancy in March 2023.
- 1.2 Since the commencement of the preparatory work on this programme, and the submission of Rotherham's sign-up form in October 2022, the Head of Service for Early Help has provided the officer lead role and has been the identified 'single point of contact' for reporting back to Department of Education (DfE) and Department Health and Social Care (DHSC) who have jointly funded this initiative.
- 1.3 There is a new acting Assistant Director for Early Help and Business Support, who has taken responsibility for the overarching Early Help portfolio, which includes the Family Hubs programme. Following other personnel changes, a Consultant in Public Health leads the continuing Family Hubs transformation and provides the contact for the DfE and DHSC.
- 1.4 As a transformation programme, the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme builds on existing services and ways of working and relates strongly to the themes of the Council plan, most directly to '*Every Child Able to Fulfil their Potential*', but also to '*People Are Safe, Healthy and Live Well*' and to '*Every Neighbourhood Thriving*'. It also has a very clear link to Aim 1 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy that '*All Children Get the Best Start in Life and Go on to Achieve their Potential*'. The programme presents an opportunity for additional resources which can enhance the offer, and to build on partnership working.

2. Key Issues (update of programme activity)

2.1 Transformation programme:

2.1.1 Rotherham model

The Family Hubs programme is delivered across the Borough, using the Children's Centre model and existing buildings, which are familiar to children and families. Sites are connected by the digital offer to provide face to face or virtual information, advice, and support for families. Three Family and Children Centres, Brookfield (North), Stepping Stones (South) and The Place (Central) host the largest main co-located sites.

- 2.1.2 All Children's Centres will deliver the Family Hubs programme and further sites are being identified, facilitated by VAR. Each further site will be supported by the VCS Strategic Coordinator to implement the Family Hubs programme at their desired level. Multiple sites are already in place including Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), Grimm & Co, JADE youth and community and Rotherham Minister with a significant number of other organisations in discussions. The sites vary in their levels of involvement with a tiered system being implemented. This ranges from signposting services to delivering training to co-location.
- 2.1.3 Within the three main hubs the following services are co-located: Early Help, Infant feeding specialist, Nursery Nurses, 0 to 19 Service, Substance Misuse workers, Midwifery, Perinatal Mental Health, MESMAC, Children Social Care, Employment Support Advisers, Digital Inclusion Team, Rotherham Rise, Holiday Activity Fund, Home Learning Workers, Intrahealth, Youth Justice Services and Voluntary Action Rotherham.
- 2.1.4 Monthly multi-disciplinary 'Locality Meetings' have been established to bring together colleagues located in or providing services from buildings delivering the Family Hubs programme. These take place at Brookfield Family and Children's Centre, The Place Family and Children's Centre and Maltby Stepping Stones Family and Children's Centre.
- 2.1.5 Changes and additions to the existing case management recording system (LiquidLogic) will enable partners to complete Early Help Assessments directly into the system. It will also offer opportunities for further transformation in relation to case management.
- 2.1.6 The Family Hubs volunteer programme entails a selection of staff from across Early Help, 0-19 Health Service and Midwifery who are identified as Volunteer Mentors. These staff members are trained and supported by the VCS Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers are recruited through various methods into a range of roles such as Breastfeeding Peer Supporter and Family Hubs Group Volunteer. They complete a thorough recruitment and induction process with the VCS Volunteer Coordinator which concludes with the allocation of a Volunteer Mentor in their named Children's Centre or other site.
- 2.1.7 **Workforce development**
- Workforce orientation and skills development are key to an integrated approach across all partners and to the optimal implementation of newly acquired evidence-based programmes.
- 214 practitioners from Early Help, Midwifery, 0-19 Public Health Nursing, Children's Social Care, Local Authority Education and Data and Performance have attended half-day Family Hub programme induction events.
 - 50 multi-disciplinary practitioners have been trained in cultural competency in infant feeding.

- 238 practitioners have undertaken training in recognising red flags in maternity, delivered by the Perinatal Mental Health Service.
- 118 practitioners have studied the Solihull Approach (a well-established evidence-based parenting programme). 59 - two-day foundation, 42 - Group Facilitator and 17 online courses.
- 3 trained in Video Interaction Guidance training and a further 14 staff due to be trained by March 2024.
- 12 trained in PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership), known as Learning Together.
- 151 Early Help Workers trained One Plus One, Parental Conflict.
- 299 trained in Early Help Assessment training.
- 57 trained in three-day course Solution Focussed Training.
- 4 trained in Family Foundation.
- 3 trained in Substance Misuse Training.
- 1 person trained in Supervision for Parent Infant Relationships.

2.1.8 Although substantial training has already been undertaken, work continues to develop the training offer further through 2024 and early 2025.

2.1.9 **Transformational workforce resources**

Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) were commissioned to provide pivotal support mechanisms to Rotherham's Family Hub programme development work. VAR has recruited two key posts to enable this: 1) a Family Hubs VCS Strategic Coordinator to enable a rigorous interface and development of additional sites and programme; 2) a VCS Volunteer Coordinator to develop and support new family hub volunteers (including expanding breastfeeding peer support) and to lead on the implementation and delivery of the Parent and Carer Panel.

2.1.10 Short-term capacity has been developed to test new approaches and build positive aspects into mainstream delivery when the programme funding comes to an end. This includes:

- Three Nursery Nurses recruited by 0-19's Public Health Nursing service, creating capacity to instigate a new supportive universal visit at age 3-4 months, in support of key parenting skills, such as weaning and key child development, such as speech and language, and providing an additional early opportunity to identify emerging needs for family help.

- A specialist breastfeeding lead has been established, to enable a coordinated approach to breastfeeding support and advice, including through expanded peer support.
- A Data Officer has been recruited to provide an essential role of understanding the performance of the programme components and to inform ongoing strategic and operational decisions for the delivery plan, as well as providing essential periodic reporting back to central government.
- Two Home-learning Officers have been recruited to establish the PEEP programme and build on current good practice.
- Recruitment for one Advanced Practitioner to support pathway development and training coordination across the partnership.
- Project Manager and Project Support Officer.
- Community Navigator, linked to REMA.

2.1.11 There has also been the introduction of three Substance Misuse Early Help workers to increase access to drug and alcohol support services; these posts are funded by a separate grant.

2.1.12 **Digital transformation**

The digital components of the programme are an essential transformational aspect, enabling new ways for families and professionals to access information and services, and allowing for an integrated and consistent model across all Children's Centres and additional sites.

2.1.13 A branded digital approach is being developed in phases throughout the programme. The latest phase of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme web pages was launched in November 2023. The Family Hub web pages give access to a suite of free evidence-based programmes to support Rotherham parents, carers, family members and teenagers, made available in a commissioned partnership with the Solihull Approach. (www.rotherham.gov.uk/family-hubs). The site is continually being developed. Appendix 2 gives an overview of usage.

2.2 Communications:

2.2.1 There have also been soft launches over Summer 2023 to transition to Family Hubs in Children's Centres directly involving children and families, which proved highly successful and engaged over 500 children and adults.

2.2.2 In November 2023 a more formal induction session/launch took place with the Strategic Director of CYPS, Lead Members for Children and Young People and for Adult Social Care and Health, and other wider Council departments, practitioners, voluntary sector and DWP. Workstream leads

also provided information on stalls relating to the Family Hub programme work and partnership within multi-disciplinary locations. A press release was placed in local press and further events are planned throughout the life of the programme.

- 2.2.3 Family Hubs programme branding is a requirement of the grant funding. Templates have been developed and are currently being shared with partners.

2.3 Funded workstreams:

2.3.1 Infant feeding support

The Infant Feeding Coordinator for Family Hubs in Children's Centres leads on infant feeding support across the Borough. She is working on the UNICEF Baby Friendly Accreditation process and working with VAR to recruit Volunteers/Breastfeeding Peer Supporters.

2.3.2 Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships

Work with partners across the Family Hub programme is being undertaken to consolidate support available and develop a 'mild to moderate' pathway to ensure women get the right support at the earliest opportunity. The predominant investment so far has been in training to better equip the workforce and enable delivery of new high-quality evidence-based approaches that can be delivered via direct family support work and via group programmes for families.

2.3.3 Parenting support

VIG (Video Interaction Guidance) is being introduced as a tool to enable observation and supportive reflection on parent-infant interactions. It is a strengths-based, brief intervention that promotes attunement, sensitivity, and mentalisation in relationships. The principles and practice can be used to work within any relationship. VIG is effective with parents and carers of children across all ages (including babies and unborn babies).

- 2.3.4 Rotherham already has an established and embedded evidence-based programme offer and has added value to this by investing heavily in the Solihull programme. There has been development of a multi-disciplinary training pool to enable better co-facilitation of group programmes and to share responsibility more evenly across the sector. The Solihull programme will enhance our offer and covers 'Journey to Parenthood'; 'Understanding Pregnancy'; 'Labour, Birth and your Baby' and 'First Five Years'. Additionally, via the acquisition of online multi-user licences, there is a comprehensive practitioner portal of resources that will support ongoing development. All parents-to-be will have access to an online digital 'Journey to Parenthood' programme and uptake will be monitored together with collation of feedback from families.

2.3.5 Evening antenatal classes were piloted together with infant feeding drop-in sessions. The antenatal classes have been particularly successful and there is now additional capacity with new midwives joining the team so the offer will be opened across other family hub sites. Further agencies will be engaged as the programme develops to become involved with evening sessions.

2.3.6 **Home learning environment / Speech, Language & Communication**

Rotherham has agreed to invest in the PEEP programme as the evidence-based intervention to support home learning and improve outcomes for 3-4-year-olds. A lead officer has been identified, a training plan developed in October 2023, and 2 Home Learning posts have been recruited to. The postholders will carry out home visits and offer the PEEP programme directly to families. These posts will also enable the training and upskilling of wider practitioners across Family Hubs in Children's Centres. The 'Train the Trainer' programme for PEEP was approved by the Operational Group in December 2023 to fund a further 24 facilitator places.

2.3.7 **Publishing the start for life offer**

This is an offer designed to provide information for parents, covering the period between conception and their child's second birthday. Within Rotherham, it is called 'Giving your Child the Best Start in Life'. It is being developed in phases, and two versions have so far been published online. Further phases will be developed, culminating in the publication of a printed leaflet that will be supplied to all new parents towards the end of the programme. Link is below:

[Best Start in Life Programme – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

2.3.8 **Parent and carer panel**

For parents and carers from pregnancy and with children 0-2 who want to shape the way services are delivered by Family Hubs in Children's Centres, the Panel is led by Voluntary Action Rotherham. It is involved in a range of activities, such as:

- Focus groups.
- Meetings.
- 'Mystery Shopper' activities.
- Online surveys & questionnaires.

2.3.9 The Parent and Carer Panel currently has 8 members and meets every 8 weeks. A focus group with different under-represented groups across the Borough also takes place every 8 weeks and explores the same challenge

question. Work is ongoing to develop the panel further. This includes recruitment, wider representation, and the development of online options for participation.

2.3.10 The extra universal three-to-four-month visit delivered by the Public Health 0 to 19 Service, will support several of the workstreams above.

2.4 Upcoming priorities:

2.4.1 A key priority of the Family Hubs programme is digital transformation, which has progressed with the procurement of the LiquidLogic Partnership and Delegated Portal. Work is now underway to engage with multiple agencies - focus groups have been established to organise configuration and implementation. The project is exploring how the portal can best connect to existing systems, to better support shared responsibility and accountability for the provision of early help and prevention.

2.4.2 Other work areas include:

- Launch the Family Hubs registration form.
- Further co-location of partner agencies.
- Increase volunteering opportunities in a range of roles with the programme.
- Continued delivery of evidence-based training for staff.
- Increase uptake of evidence-based programmes.
- Establish further sites around the Borough, making it easier for families to access services.
- Further consultation opportunities to be identified.
- Update both digital and start for life offers.
- Management Information systems to be completed.

2.5 Next steps:

2.5.1 With just over a year of the programme remaining, it is a useful time to review and reflect on what has been achieved, and look for potential gaps, and priorities for the remainder of the transformation effort. With this in mind, a workshop with partners will take place in late February, informed by 'Maturity Self-Assessment' framework. The workshop will take stock, reassess available resources, management processes, and the need to reprioritise, establish new task and finish groups, etc.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal:

3.1 Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission note the update of programme activity detailed above.

3.2 As this is an update report, there are no relevant programme options or other recommendations for panel members to consider.

4. Consultation:

4.1 Consultation is embedded into the programme principally through the Parent Carer Panel and digital surveys. One of the next steps will also be to review co location and joint working effectiveness.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:

5.1 The timetable and accountability were detailed in the Cabinet report of 23rd February 2023 (appendix 3).

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications:

6.1 Financial and procurement implications were detailed in the Cabinet report of 16th October 2023 (appendix 4). There are no further financial implications within this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications:

7.1 Legal implications were detailed in the Cabinet report of 16th October 2023 (appendix 3).

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications:

8.1 HR implications were detailed in the Cabinet report of 16th October 2023 (appendix 3). There are no further HR implications within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults:

9.1 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults were detailed in the Cabinet report of 16th October 2023 (appendix 4).

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications:

10.1 An equality analysis was attached to Cabinet report from 16th October 2023 (appendix 4)

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change:

11.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

12. Implications for Partners:

12.1 Implications for Partners were detailed in the Cabinet report of 23rd February 2023 (appendix 3).

13. Risks and Mitigation:

13.1 Risks and mitigations were detailed in the Cabinet report of 16th October 2023 (appendix 4). The risk register for the remainder of the programme will be reviewed following the Maturity Self-Assessment workshop on 29th February.

Accountable Officer(s):

Kelly White acting Assistant Director for Early Help and Business Support.
Alex Hawley, Consultant in Public Health.
Rob Savage, Departmental Business Services Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Name of Strategic Director	23/02/24
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	23/02/24

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

