

# BRIEFING

<b>TO:</b>	Health and Wellbeing Board
<b>DATE:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Alex Hawley Consultant in Public Health (Best Start and Beyond) Adult Care, Housing and Public Health Kirsty Woodhead Head of Service Family Help Children & Young People's Services
<b>TITLE:</b>	Family Hubs Progress Update and Extension

## 1. Background

1.1 This briefing provides an update on the successful delivery of the three-year transformation project, the embedding of the Family Hub model, extended for a fourth year, and the expectations and focus of the programme until under the end of the next funding period (2028).

1.2 The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme has been in place for three and a half years, following the initial three years of funding and the 12-month extension from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. Year four of the programme provided an opportunity to explore the “go furthers” outlined in the national guidance, enabling local authorities to continue to strengthen delivery, innovate, and deepen integration across services.

1.3 The Family Hub Programme in Rotherham operates through a strong partnership approach, bringing together Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), local health services including the 0-19 Service, Midwifery and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to deliver integrated support for families.

1.4 **Family Hubs**  
Rotherham has three main Family Hubs across the Borough:

- Brookfield Family Hub
- The Place Family Hub
- Maltby Stepping Stones Family Hub

These buildings are currently designated (with the DfE) Children’s Centres (0- 5); however, delivery has been expanded through the Family Hubs Programme to offer services to families with children aged 0-19 (25 with SEND).

These buildings provide co-location of services such as Early Help, Children’s Social Care, 0-19 Public Health Nursing, Midwifery and other agencies delivering Family Hub Services. A range of Family Hub services are typically delivered from these buildings, including but not limited to:

- Parenting support, such as parenting groups and discussion groups.
- Peep learning together groups.
- Midwife appointments.
- Health visitor and nursery nurse appointments.

- Infant feeding support.
- Breast pump loan scheme.
- Antenatal classes and sessions for expectant parents.
- Groups and activities for children under 5 and their families, for example stay and play, baby massage, sensory sessions.
- Groups for young people such as targeted youth groups.
- Groups for parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Employment support from DWP Family Community Work Coaches.
- Peer support for families affected by perinatal mental health.

Attendees to these buildings are greeted by someone on reception who has undertaken a Family Hubs induction and can support and advise families to access services they might need.

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### **RMBC Family Hub Building**

Rotherham has four buildings, three of which are currently designated (with the DfE) Children's Centres (0- 5) which form part of the Family Hubs system across the Borough:

- Dalton Family and Children's Centre
- Dinnington Early Help Centre
- Dinnington Family and Children's Centre
- Ferham Family and Children's Centre

These buildings may have some co-located services such as Early Help, Midwifery and other agencies delivering Family Hub services, however due to the building size, this is on a lesser basis than the main Family Hub sites detailed previously. The range of Family Hub services typically delivered from these buildings, include but is not limited to:

- Parenting support, such as parenting groups and discussion groups.
- Peep learning together groups.
- Midwife appointments.
- Infant feeding support.
- Connectivity to the breast pump loan scheme.
- Groups and activities for children under 5 and their families, for example stay and play, baby massage, sensory sessions.
- Groups for young people such as targeted youth groups.
- Peer support for families affected by perinatal mental health.

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### **Family Hub network within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**

To support families to access Family Hubs services within their communities, Rotherham commissions organisations from the VCS to be part of the Family Hub network within the overall system. The network is commissioned annually and therefore subject to change. Currently the following organisations are part of the Family Hub network:

- REMA
- Swinton Lock
- Rotherham Parent and Carer Forum
- Jade Youth and Community Centre
- YWCA Yorkshire
- Clifton Learning Partnership
- Activate

- Bright Stars
- The Fun Hub
- Grimm and Co
- Kiveton Park Community Trust

These buildings don't typically have co-location of services but are places where families can access or be connected to some of the Family Hubs services/activities. The services delivered in these buildings will vary, however services which are typically delivered might include:

- Parenting support, such as parenting groups and discussion groups.
- Peep learning together groups.
- Infant feeding support.
- Groups and activities for children under 5 and their families, for example stay and play sessions.
- Groups for young people such as targeted youth groups.
- Peer support for families affected by perinatal mental health.

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### **Outreach services**

The Family Hubs programme recognises that some families face barriers to accessing services, therefore we include flexible, community-led support that responds to local needs. This means some of the Family Hubs services are delivered on an outreach basis, meaning they are delivered in other community venues across the Borough.

These buildings include, but are not exclusive to local community centres, libraries, faith organisations and schools. These services are shaped on the needs within communities therefore they vary however, some of the services currently delivered include:

- Community led infant feeding sessions such as Big Latch event, Picnic in the park.
- Parenting support, such as parenting groups and discussion groups.
- Peep learning together groups.
- Midwife appointments.
- Health visitor and nursery nurse appointments.
- Infant feeding support.
- Antenatal classes and sessions for expectant parents.
- Groups and activities for children under 5 and their families, for example stay and play, baby massage, sensory sessions.
- Groups for young people such as targeted youth groups.
- Groups for parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

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The Family Hubs programme has a strong infrastructure in place:

- Clear programme management structure along with numerous workstream leads to oversee delivery.
- Regular communication and engagement are supported through the Best Start in Life Guide and the monthly Family Hub newsletter, which keeps partners and families informed of services and support available through the programme.
- Governance and performance are embedded through a monthly operational group. Separate quarterly performance and communication meetings are scheduled.
- Initiatives such as Baby Packs have had a positive impact on registrations, helping to connect families with services early, with 93% of families agreeing to register for a family hub.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular reporting mechanisms established to Department of Health &amp; Social Care and Department of Education.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Key Issues</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Family Hub Programme Outcomes</b></p> <p>The programme has captured case studies showcasing success stories from volunteers, fathers, and engagement with ethnic minority groups. These stories highlight the impact of Family Hubs in building confidence, improving access to support, and fostering inclusive community engagement.</p>
<b>2.2</b>	<p><b>Transformation:</b></p> <p>The first four years of the programme were intended to be a largely transformational project and has led to improved digital connectivity by using online tools and platforms to link families with services, resources, and information in a more accessible and efficient way. The network has been developed to support families access to services and the partners involved in the programme have worked together to develop integrated support for children and families.</p>
<b>2.3</b>	<p><b>Parenting Support:</b></p> <p>The programme has expanded support for parents and carers by offering evidence-based sessions, co-facilitated to help parents and soon-to-be parents with aspects of parenthood. The programme has introduced a peer support and volunteer offer to complement targeted outreach and interventions, with 29 active volunteers.</p> <p>The programme has an improved universal and targeted evidence-based parenting support offer with face-to-face programmes delivered across the Borough, alongside access to online programmes for those who prefer this approach. Access to online programmes that can be completed at their own pace, and convenience offers greater flexibility for parents and carers who may not usually complete programmes. As of November 2025, the Togetherness (previously Solihull) online programmes had 681 registered learners.</p> <p>One example of tailored support was delivered through a partnership with Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), who engaged mothers that would not normally access services. All participants successfully completed the Triple P parenting programme, and they were positive about its impact and how it helped build confidence and engagement with wider Family Hub support.</p>
<b>2.4</b>	<p><b>Infant Feeding:</b></p> <p>The programme has enabled an expansion of the infant feeding offer with a recruitment and training pathway for infant feeding peer support volunteers led by the NHS Infant Feeding Lead and a Volunteer Co-ordinator based in Voluntary Action Rotherham. This has seen an increase in the number of infant feeding peer supporters, with a focus on recruiting women from under-represented ethnic backgrounds. Since quarter 2 of 2023/2024, 51 infant feeding peer supporters have been trained.</p> <p>Six Children's Centre sites (part of the Family Hubs network) have achieved UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation Stage 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brookfield Family Hub</li> <li>• The Place Family Hub</li> <li>• Maltby Stepping Stones Family Hub</li> <li>• Dalton Family and Children's Centre</li> <li>• Dinnington Family and Children's Centre</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ferham Family and Children's Centre</li> </ul> <p>39 staff have completed UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Managers Training.</p> <p><b>2.5 Perinatal Mental Health:</b></p> <p>At the start of the Family Hub programme, perinatal mental health awareness was identified as a major gap and resulted in significant investment in training for the Family Hub and wider workforce. Over 300 practitioners from across the Family Hub multi-agency workforce have completed perinatal mental health training to ensure that the workforce are equipped to effectively identify and support perinatal mental health.</p> <p>In addition to co-located multi-agency staff in the main Family Hubs, the programme also works jointly with local charity Light Peer Support to provide support to families affected by perinatal mental health, with groups delivered from the Family Hubs.</p> <p>Completion rates of the Maternal Mood questionnaire within 8 weeks of baby's birth, have steadily risen from 70.4% to 86.9% in quarter 3 of 2023/2024, evidencing an improvement in early identification of perinatal mental health.</p> <p><b>2.6 Home Learning</b></p> <p>As part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, the Department for Education required investment in the Peep Learning Together Programme. This is a programme to help parents, carers and practitioners share ideas and simple low-cost activities to support a baby and/or child's learning in everyday life, through talking, singing, play, and reading. The sessions are also an opportunity for families to meet and gain peer support. The programme covers personal, social, and emotional development, communication and language, early literacy, early maths, health, and physical development.</p> <p>The programme has been embedded as part of the Family Hubs offer for parents and carers and a referral pathway has been established to support easy access. As of November 2025, 219 families have attended sessions since January 2024. It anticipated that they take the learning from the programme into their family home, and their engagement with their children.</p> <p><b>2.7 Parent Carer Panels:</b></p> <p>A key aim of the programme is to have a Parent and Carer Panel with representation from pregnant women, parents and carers of children under the age of 2. A Parent Carer Panel was established which put the needs of local babies and families at the centre of service design and delivery. The panel has been a significant contributor to the development of the programme with examples of their involvement with the programme including co-producing the Start for Life Offer and shaping the Perinatal Mental Health Pathway. The panel meet monthly and representatives from the panel attend the monthly FamilyHubs Operational Group to ensure that engagement with the Parent Carer Panel ensures continuous improvement of the Family Hubs programme.</p> <p><b>2.8 Start for Life Offer:</b></p> <p>The programme required the publication of a Start for Life offer for parents, carers and their families which sets out the services and support available to families in the borough during the first 1,001 days of a baby's life. The Parent Carer Panel were invaluable in this piece of work, ensuring that Rotherham's Start for Life offer was clear, easy to use, family friendly in its production, with relevant content.</p> <p>The Start for Life offer is available to all families both digitally and physically and includes essential support that any new family might need: midwifery, health visiting,</p>
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	<p>mental health support, infant-feeding advice and specialist breastfeeding support, safeguarding and services relating to SEND.</p> <p>The Guide was originally distributed by midwives but is now provided within the Baby Packs and across the system.</p> <p><b>2.9 Extension of Family Hubs programme:</b></p> <p>In July 2025, in the policy paper 'Giving every child the best start in life', the Government set out its intention to strengthen support services for families, and to build on the Family Hubs and Start for Life approach (as well as their previous Sure Start approach), to create 'Best Start Family Hubs' across all areas of the country.</p> <p>In December 2025, it was announced that there will be a further three years of funding (2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29), extending to every local authority in England. The extended funding will transform and scale up early-years and whole-family support by embedding the Family Hubs delivery model, building a network of up to 1,000 hubs nationwide, and continuing to invest in Start for Life services (now known as 'Healthy Babies Programme'), tackling inequalities, and aligning with the government's broader early-intervention and child development goals.</p> <p>On 6th November 2025, Rotherham received a provisional allocation of £5,052,800 for financial years 2026-29. At this stage there is insufficient detail about expectations of delivery to be able to specify the plans for Rotherham's approach beyond March 2026. However, it is clear there is a new expectation to deliver a national target for achieving Good Level of Development for reception age students, by the end of the academic year of 2028. Moreover, there is now a strong commitment from Government to retaining the Family Hubs identity, supported by the continued roll out of Best Start Family Hubs across the Country and ongoing funding for Rotherham.</p>
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<b>3. Key Actions and Timelines</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	A management information data report and delivery plan progress updates were submitted to the DfE in September 2025 and are required on a quarterly basis, with follow-up progress interviews taking place monthly with the DfE.
<b>3.2</b>	The remaining Management Information (MI) Data Returns for year 4 of the programme have submission deadlines of 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 (Q3 2025/26) and 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2026 (Q4 2025/26).
<b>3.3</b>	Rotherham's Best Start Local plan to be published on Council website by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026, setting out our approach to Good Level of Development. There will also be a separate delivery plan for the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme.
<b>3.4</b>	April 2026 onwards will see the continuation of the Family Hubs Programme through Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme.

<b>4. Recommendations</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	To note the progress made in the last four years, and the continuation of the programme with Best Start Family Hubs 2026-2029.