

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 13 April 2026

Report Title

Family Hubs progress update and extension

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

Yes

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme has now been in place for three and a half years and this report provides an update on the successful delivery of the programme and the future of the programme confirmed by Government. It also recommends a consultation to formally deregister and rebrand the Children's Centre buildings to enable them to move into the Family Hubs system, bringing all delivery in line with the Department for Education's new Best Start Family Hubs programme and current guidance.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the update and progress made in the delivery of the Family Hubs programme over the last year.
2. Approves a consultation on proposals to deregister the existing Children's Centres to enable the Council to move forward with the Family Hubs programme and for the decision, based on the consultation, to be delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
3. Approves, in line with government requirements and to ensure consistency for families, that Family Hubs and Children's Centre buildings are renamed as

either Best Start Family Hubs or “Connect” Best Start Family Hubs, in line with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme expectations.

4. Notes the future of the programme with additional grant funding to embed the model and agrees that the decision to accept and allocate this funding be delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People’s Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Current Family Hubs Buildings and Services
- Appendix 2 Family Hub Offer
- Appendix 3 Family Hubs Programme Initial Equality Screening Assessment
- Appendix 4 Family Hubs Programme Part B Equality Assessment
- Appendix 5 Family Hubs Programme Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Family Hubs Start for Life 2025-2026](#)

[Giving every child the best start in life - GOV.UK](#)

[Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies – Preparing for implementation April 2026](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Health & Wellbeing Board – 28 January 2026

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Family Hubs progress update and extension

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2022 Rotherham was one of 75 pre-selected Local Authorities (based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI) Average Rank) who were invited to sign up to the Family Hubs and Start for Life three-year programme (ending in March 2025), without the need to complete a competitive bid, for grant funding of £3.4m.
- 1.2 The aim was to have an improved 'whole family' approach to service delivery, with broader co-location of partners and services, utilising existing premises. It involved a highly transformative way of working, rather than simply investing in unsustainable front-line capacity. Cabinet accepted the proposed approach and the proposed spend of grant funding in February 2023.
- 1.3 As a transformation project, 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 '*Children and young people achieve*', but also to '*Places are thriving, safe, and clean*' and to '*Residents live well*'. It also has a noticeably 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 continues to present an opportunity for additional resources which can enhance the offer, and to build on partnership working in line with the Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham.
- 1.4 Prior to the scheduled end of the programme, in January 2025, the Government announced a 12-month extension from 31 March 2025 – 1 April 2026. To support this work, grant funding of £1.1m was made available to Rotherham. The purpose of the extension was to support continued delivery of integrated services for families with children up to age 19 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and further develop and embed the Family Hub model, providing a one-stop-shop for families needing advice and support, particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation.
- 1.5 In July 2025, in a policy paper entitled '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.
- 1.6 On 6 November 2025 Rotherham received a provisional allocation of £5,052,800 for financial years 2026-29. There is now a clear and strong commitment from Government to retaining the Family Hubs identity, supported by the continued roll out of Family Hubs across the Country and ongoing funding for Rotherham through the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme.
- 1.7 The Council committed a further £370,000 in March 2024 to support Early Help services including an additional 300 universal sessions for under 5s annually. These were divided equally across the Borough, providing universal activities

such as new birth celebration sessions; baby massage; baby first aid; treasure basket sessions; reach, roll and play sessions; talking tots; toddler yoga; stay and play groups; and baby weigh sessions.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Update:

2.1.1 Family Hubs Buildings and Services:

The Government's clear and strong commitment to Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme is confirmed in their commitment to funding for 2026-29. This supports ongoing service delivery across the Borough, from a variety of buildings designated as Family Hubs, as well as through outreach services in alternative community venues.

2.1.2 Rotherham has adopted what can be described as a blended approach to its Family Hubs buildings.

2.1.3 Family Hubs

Rotherham has three main Family Hubs across the Borough:

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

2.1.4 These buildings are currently designated (within the historic DfE definition) 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). The DfE guidance for Children's Centres has not been updated since 2013 and was superseded by the Family Hubs programme. For completeness and to move forward with the Family Hubs programme, there is an opportunity to formally deregister the Children's Centre status for Brookfield, The Place and Maltby Stepping Stones, as recorded with the DfE. This will allow them to be known as Best Start Family Hubs and aligns with current DfE guidance. This will not impact on service delivery.

2.1.5 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 (see 2.2.5 for explanation of the programme).
- 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.

2.1.6 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.

2.1.7 **Connect Family Hubs**

Rotherham has four further buildings which form part of the Family Hubs programme as 'Connect Family Hubs' across the Borough, three of which are currently designated Children's Centres;

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

2.1.8 As stated in 2.1.4, DfE guidance relating to Children's Centres is no longer updated by the DfE. Dalton Family and Children's Centre, Dinnington Family and Children's Centre and Ferham Family and Children's Centre remain registered with the DfE as Children's Centres. In line with the Family Hubs guidance, it is proposed that the Council deregisters these three as Children's Centres and rebrands them in line with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme guidance.

2.1.9 These buildings 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 are not limited to:

- Parenting support, such as parenting groups and discussion groups.
- Peer 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.

Should further funding become available, the Council will consider options for other Connect Family Hub provision in other locations in the future.

2.1.10 **Community Network Family Hubs:**

To support families to access Family Hubs services within their communities, in line with Grant requirements, Rotherham commissions organisations from the Voluntary and Community Sector to be part of the Family Hub network. The network is commissioned annually and therefore is subject to change and DfE guidance.

2.1.11 These buildings do not typically have co-location of services but are places where families can access or be connected to some of the Family Hubs services and activities. The services delivered in these buildings will vary, however most typically 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.

2.1.12 The Family Hubs programme recognises that some families face barriers to accessing services, so must deliver flexible, community-led support that responds to local needs. Some of the Family Hubs services are delivered on an outreach basis and through other community venues across the Borough, taking activities to the heart of local communities. These buildings include, but are not exclusive to local community centres, libraries, faith organisations, and schools.

2.1.13 This tiered approach to delivering Family Hubs services ensures that children and families have easy access to locality-based support and has significantly improved the connectivity and cohesiveness between the council, health, voluntary, community, faith, and charity sector organisations.

2.2 **Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme:**

2.2.1 The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme has seven dedicated workstreams under which programme delivery takes place:

- Transformation (including digital connectivity).
- Parenting Support.
- Infant Feeding.
- Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships.
- Home Learning Environment.
- Start for Life Offer.
- Parent Carer Panels.

2.2.2 **Transformation:**

The first four years of the programme were intended to be a largely transformational project and have 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.

2.2.3 The programme has a strong infrastructure with the project managed within Children and Young People's Services and supported by a strong partnership of agencies involved in delivery. The Family Hubs Operational Group and Family Help Partnership Group provide effective multi-agency oversight to the programme.

2.2.4 Key achievements include the launch of the Family Hubs website and Start for Life offer, investment in workforce training to ensure a skilled and empowered workforce, strengthened multi-agency collaboration and training, and embedding family-centred practice.

2.2.5 **Parenting Support:**

The programme has significantly strengthened parenting support across Rotherham by delivering flexible, evidence-based interventions for parents and carers.

2.2.6 This improved universal and targeted parenting support offer provides 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 an individual's pace, and convenience offers greater flexibility for parents and carers who may not usually complete programmes.

2.2.7 The programme aims to normalise parenting support and reducing stigma in accessing services, and increase engagement from seldom-heard groups, empowering parents, and carers to feel confident and supported in their parenthood journey.

2.2.8 **Infant Feeding:**

The programme has significantly expanded the infant feeding offer through a structured recruitment and training pathway for peer support volunteers. Community-led initiatives such as the Big Latch event, World Breastfeeding Day, and other informal activities have successfully promoted breastfeeding.

2.2.9 All parents receive personalised support on feeding choices, including breastfeeding initiation, expressing, and formula feeding, with access to out-of-hours help, drop-in sessions, and 24/7 support via the National Breastfeeding Helpline and virtual assistant 'Ask Olive'.

2.2.10 Additional measures include a breast pump loan scheme across Family Hubs, improved digital and in-person support options, and accredited training for staff and volunteers to deliver consistent, evidence-based advice. Rotherham has achieved UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Stage One accreditation across six buildings (all part of the Family Hubs network), reinforcing its commitment to creating baby-friendly environments.

2.2.11 **Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships:**

At the outset of the Family Hub programme, perinatal mental health was identified as an area of focus, prompting substantial investment in workforce training and support. Over 300 practitioners across the multi-agency network have completed specialist training to improve early identification and intervention.

2.2.12 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.

2.2.13 Workforce training now enables sensitive, inclusive conversations with parents and carers, normalising discussions around mental health and reducing stigma. A clear pathway ensures universal and targeted support is available, while antenatal classes incorporate advice on perinatal mental health and the importance of early relationships.

2.2.14 These developments have improved awareness, early intervention, and access to support for mothers, fathers, and caregivers, creating more responsive and integrated support.

2.2.15 **Home Learning Environment:**

As part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, investment was made in the Peep Learning Together Programme, which supports parents, carers, and practitioners to create rich home learning environments through everyday activities such as talking, singing, play, and reading. Peep sessions also provide opportunities for families to connect and gain peer support, covering key areas of child development including communication, language, literacy, maths, health, and emotional wellbeing.

2.2.16 To ensure sustainability, library colleagues and the Family Hub network have also been trained, creating borough-wide coverage and reinforcing the commitment to improving home learning environments for all families.

2.2.17 **Start for Life Offer:**

As part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, a comprehensive Start for Life offer has been developed and published to ensure families across Rotherham have clear, accessible information about the services available during the first 1,001 days. The Parent Carer Panel played a vital role in shaping the offer to ensure it is family-friendly, relevant, and easy to use.

2.2.18 The offer is available both digitally and in print and has been widely promoted in Family Hubs, GP surgeries, pharmacies, libraries, and other community spaces. It is also included in Rotherham Baby Packs and the Red Book (Personal Child Health Record).

2.2.19 The universal offer provides essential support for new families, including midwifery, health visiting, mental health services, infant feeding and safe sleep advice, specialist breastfeeding support, safeguarding, and SEND services.

2.2.20 By ensuring parents and carers are aware of the support available, the Start for Life offer empowers families to give their babies the best start in life, improving health and education outcomes and enabling children to thrive.

2.2.21 **Parent Carer Panels:**

A key aim of the programme is to have a Parent and Carer Panel with representation from pregnant women and parents of children under two. The panel has become an integral part of service design and delivery for Family Hubs, playing a central role in shaping the programme, including the development of the Family Hub website and the Start for Life offer.

2.2.22 Engagement with the panel ensures that the voices of parents and carers are at the heart of decision-making and continuous improvement. Representatives attend the Family Hubs Operational Group, providing feedback on key topics and challenge questions to influence meaningful change.

2.2.23 The Parent Carer Panel has strengthened co-production across the programme, ensuring services are responsive, inclusive, and reflective of the needs of local families.

2.3 **Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme 2026-2029:**

2.3.1 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 create 'Best Start Family Hubs' across all areas of the country.

2.3.2 Jointly funded by the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care, the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme will bring together the strongest elements of Sure Start and the Family Hubs and Start for Life approaches to create a more integrated, accessible system of support for families across the country.

2.3.3 To implement this 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 Best Start 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.

2.3.4 On 6th November 2025, Rotherham received a provisional allocation of £5,052,800 for financial years 2026-29 with further guidance due to be released before April 2026 setting out programme expectations for service delivery and principles for effective delivery moving forwards.

2.3.5 This allows the Council to build on the success of the current Family Hubs programme and further expand delivery in 2026 onwards. Learning from the current programme will be used to ensure that future service delivery is meeting the needs of children and families and providing easy to access, integrated, community-based support. A further report will be brought to Cabinet in the summer to confirm proposals for this ongoing programme.

2.4 **Children's Centres:**

2.4.1 As previously stated, Rotherham maintained some of the Children's Centres introduced during the Sure Start programme. These included the six centres which have been absorbed into the Family Hubs programme (Dalton Family and Children's Centre; Dinnington Family and Children's Centre; Ferham Family and Children's Centre; Brookfield Family and Children's Centre; The Place Family and Children's Centre; and Maltby Stepping Stones Family and Children's Centre). In addition, three centres were contracted to deliver Children's Centre Services (Aughton Early Years Centre; the Arnold Centre: and Rawmarsh Children's Centre); in September 2025, these contracts ended and delivery moved from these three buildings and continued in other community venues within the localities.

2.4.2 The Children's Centre model was an initiative under a previous Government, which has been superseded by the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme and model of 0-19 (25 with SEND) Family Hubs. Now that the current Government have confirmed their commitment to this programme, it is timely to reconsider Children's Centre registration alongside the newly named Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme.

2.4.3 Families have told the Council that the dual terminology of both Children's Centres and Family Hubs is confusing. Furthermore, DfE guidance relating to Children's Centres has not been updated since April 2013, making it obsolete. It is therefore recommended that currently registered Children's Centres be deregistered and services be formally rebranded in line with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme.

2.4.4 Rebranding will not impact on service delivery as the function of the buildings will continue under the new name. Support for children 0-5 and their families continues to be an integral part of the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme and rebranding Children's Centres will not reduce provision.

2.4.5 Consistent branding will ensure stable delivery of the programme, aligning Rotherham's approach with that of the Government's Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme, whilst providing clarity for children and their families.

- 2.4.6 Further guidance from the DfE is expected before April 2026 which will inform the naming convention of buildings. However, based on current guidance, it is anticipated that from April 2026;
- Brookfield Family and Children’s Centre will be rebranded Best Start Family Hub – Swinton
 - The Place Family and Children’s Centre will be rebranded Best Start Family Hub – Clifton
 - Maltby Stepping Stones Family and Children’s Centre will be rebranded Best Start Family Hub - Maltby
- 2.4.7 In terms of Family Hubs Network sites (Appendix 1), it is anticipated that from April 2026, Dalton Family and Children’s Centre; Dinnington Early Help Centre; Dinnington Family and Children’s Centre; Ferham Family and Children’s Centre will be rebranded Connect Best Start Family Hubs.
- 2.4.8 The Family Hubs offer delivered via the voluntary and community sector will retain their organisation name with an identifier that they are part of the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme.
- 2.4.9 To undertake this work, and ensure children and families are actively involved, a consultation process is required to gather views and inform decision making.
- 2.4.10 If agreed, notification will be made to the DfE formally confirming this approach. There will not be any implications for the Council given that Children’s Centre guidance is no longer up to date. Existing Children’s Centre buildings will continue to be used to deliver services to children and families through the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme.
- 2.4.11 The centres to be deregistered are Dalton Family and Children’s Centre; Dinnington Family and Children’s Centre; Ferham Family and Children’s Centre; Brookfield Family and Children’s Centre; The Place Family and Children’s Centre; Maltby Stepping Stones Family and Children’s Centre; Aughton Early Years Centre; the Arnold Centre; and Rawmarsh Children’s Centre.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 In relation to Children’s Centres, the report presents an option to consult with children and their families on proposals to deregister the existing Children’s Centres, rebranding as Best Start Family Hubs or “Connect” Best Start Family Hubs in line with the DfE guidance to enable the Council to move forward with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme. This will provide clarity and consistency for those accessing services, in line with grant funding and DfE guidance.
- 3.2 A second option for consideration is to continue with the current arrangement of both Children’s Centres and Family Hubs. This approach may result in ongoing confusion for families about where to access services and what support is available. It would not support consistent branding and messaging when working with both families and partners.

- 3.3 This approach would not align with current DfE guidance for the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme, potentially affecting future funding and partnership opportunities.
- 3.4 It is recommended that a consultation be undertaken on proposals to deregister the existing Children’s Centres, to enable the Council to move forward with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme. The report further recommends that the authority to make decisions on this matter following consultation be delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People’s Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 3.5 The report recommends that Cabinet notes the progress made in delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.
- 3.6 It is also recommended that Cabinet notes the future development of the programme, which includes additional grant funding to embed the model and agrees the recommendation for the decision to accept and allocate this funding to be delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People’s Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation is embedded into the programme guidance through the requirement for a Parent and Carer Panel, to determine feedback from families accessing services, plus the Infant Feeding survey and other digital surveys.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 A management information data report and delivery plan progress update were submitted to the DfE in September 2025, and these are required on a quarterly basis. Follow-up progress interviews take place monthly with the Project lead and DfE.
- 5.2 To date all Maturity Self-Assessments, delivery plans and management information that have been submitted throughout the life of the programme have been accepted and received positively by DfE.
- 5.3 The Best Start local plan is expected to be published in April 2026.
- 5.4 From April 2026 onwards, the implementation of the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme will commence in line with Government guidance.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The table below sets out the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme spending plan for 2025-26 and demonstrates how the funding will have been used to achieve the programme objectives in Rotherham in Year 4 of the programme (2025-26).

	2025/26 Plan (£)
Transformation*	265,671
Parenting Support	223,357
Home Learning Environment	133,796
Perinatal Mental Health & PIR	446,317
Infant Feeding	228,867
Start for Life Offer & Parent Carer Panels	24,092
TOTAL ALLOCATION	1,322,100

* Transformation spend includes £81,971 capital expenditure for premises refurbishment and works to facilitate co-location of family hub services.

- 6.2 The funding is broken down across funded workstreams, with a clear directive to spend in line with the strand allocations by March 2026. The allocations across the strands are dictated by DfE. Spend within each strand includes an allocation for transformation delivery.
- 6.3 Provisional funding allocations have now been confirmed by the Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care for the delivery of Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies from 2026-27 to 2028-29.
- 6.4 The table below sets out Rotherham's funding allocation across the relevant programme strands for financial years 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29. Further guidance and grant conditions are due to be released before April 2026 setting out programme expectations for service delivery and principles for effective delivery moving forwards. In the meantime, work has commenced to review the existing programme in readiness for the delivery of the new programme from April 2026.

Strand	%	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - programme	23%	£435,800	£356,300	£365,900
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - capital	5%	£87,200	£88,900	£90,600
Parenting support	17%	£285,900	£289,400	£302,100
Home learning environment support	13%	£215,500	£218,200	£227,800
Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships	26%	£441,200	£441,200	£441,200
Infant feeding support	14%	£229,100	£229,100	£229,100
Healthy babies offers and parent carer panels	2%	£26,100	£26,100	£26,100
Total Allocation		£1,720,700	£1,649,200	£1,682,900

- 6.5 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The programme adheres to The Children Act 2004 which strengthens child protection measures and introduced the “Every Child Matters” framework. It is noted that the programme builds on partnership working which adheres to the Working together to safeguard children, statutory guidance 2023 that focuses on strengthening multi-agency work to protect and safeguard children.
- 7.2 The programme also includes the provision of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities for which, under section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the Local Authority must have regard to the views of the child and their parents to enable their participation in decisions and facilitate the development of the child to help him or her achieve the best possible outcomes. In view of the legislation and statutory guidance pertaining to Local Authorities’ duties towards young children and government expectations highlighted in this paper, there are no legal implications in following recommendations at 3.6 set out above endorsing the approach and noting progress around delivery.
- 7.3 The recommendation at 3.4 is that a consultation be undertaken (in line with the Statutory Guidance) on proposals to deregister the existing Children’s Centres to enable the Council to move forward with the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme.
- 7.4 Section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006 imposes a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to secure such consultation as they think appropriate before making any significant change to the services provided through a designated Children’s Centre and before anything is done that would result in a designated Children’s Centre ceasing to be a Children’s Centre.
- 7.5 The DfE will need to be notified of any decision to deregister a Children’s Centre.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 Appointments to posts for Family Hubs were made as fixed-term contracts given the grant funding for the 3 years (2022-25). The Government confirmed funding for a further year (2025-26) at short notice and contracts were extended to reflect this.
- 8.2 Employers from across the partnership will ensure compliance with employment legislation, should roles change or be discontinued.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The current Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme and the new Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme add value to existing provision for children, young people, and families across the Borough.
- 9.2 To date the programme has created new integrated approaches between the public, voluntary and community sectors and new evidence-based interventions and support for children and families. This will be further developed in the next

phase of the programme.

9.3 All services delivered through Family Hubs must comply with safeguarding legislation, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme is designed to be inclusive and accessible, engaging families from diverse communities and socio-economic backgrounds in support.

10.2 Support is delivered on a continuum from universal to targeted, reducing stigma and enabling access to early help, with digital self-serve options available to all and more intensive support for families who need it.

10.3 The programme enhances cross-agency collaboration and promotes co-location of services, making it easier for children and families to access support in a non-stigmatising way. It is focused on narrowing gaps in deprivation and tackling inequalities in health, education, and family outcomes through evidence-based, collaborative interventions that prioritise underrepresented groups.

10.4 While the programme highlights the first 1001 days of a child's life, it also supports children and young people of all ages, including adolescents, through outreach, engagement, and digital resources available in multiple languages, further strengthening its commitment to equality and inclusion.

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 The extension in 2025-26 and the continued funding through the Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies programme sees the continuation of partners benefitting from access to enhanced training, expanded and cohesive pathways, joint approaches, and a better understanding of the shared impact on children and families.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Unable to meet the expectations of the programme.	Reputational risk to the Local Authority. Reduced funding, or potential claw back. Reduced opportunities for children and families.	Rotherham has met all expectations of the programme to date. Family Help partners have been developing a strong family help system since 2016, enabling a strong foundation to deliver the programme and meet

		expectations. The Family Help Partnership Group and Family Hubs Operational Group enable rigorous oversight of the key deliverables.
Financial risk of building a financial commitment beyond the life of the programme.	Budget pressures.	Strict financial principles are in place. Decisions are made considering the long term sustainability of the programme and ensuring changes are embedded as business as usual without ongoing costs. Spend is planned across the funding period to maximise benefits.

14. Accountable Officer(s):

Kelly White, Service Director, Family Help
Kirsty Woodhead, Head of Service, Family Help

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	20/03/2026
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/03/2026
Service Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	13/03/2026

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