

Gloucestershire County Council

Early Years and Schools Forum Report

Proposals for Children and Family Centres / Families Hubs

January 2022

1. Background

- 1.1.** In June 2016, Cabinet approved a new model of working for Children and Family Centres (C&FC) to support children pre-birth to 11 years and their families. This moved away from providing universal support to targeting those who have a level of need that would require intervention.
- 1.2.** This targeted family support service is based in 16 Children and Family Centre buildings in the areas of greatest deprivation in Gloucestershire. These Children and Family Centres are being managed by three organisations, two commissioned externally and one commissioned in house.
- 1.3.** The other 27 Children's Centres have been de-designated as formal Children's Centres and have been developed as hubs for early education and childcare, universal services delivered by private, voluntary and community groups and as bases for professionals who work with families.

2. Recommissioning of the Children and Family Centres and Family Hubs

- 2.1.** The contracts for the 16 C&FC approved by Cabinet in June 2016 for three years from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2020 with an option to extend for two years and the extension of the contracts until March 2022 was approved by Cabinet, 24th July 2019.
- 2.2.** Cabinet approval was given in July 2021 to vary the current contracts to extend the end date of the targeted services (in the 16 CCs) until 31st March 2023. To allow us to reshape and consult in order to consider an offer around developing an integrated service to children and families in Gloucestershire.
- 2.3.** Recently the Family Hub model has emerged nationally as an effective integrated model which is being encouraged by various policy initiatives as facilitators to support a range of policy areas. In particular, the agenda is driven by a Children's Commissioner Paper; Best Start for Life: A vision for the 1001 critical days (March 2021).

2.4. This prompted the Integrated Children and Families Commissioning Hub, to explore the future of Children and Family Centres as part of a potential key ingredient to support the creation of Family Hubs, whereby they are reimagined as community bases for families with children aged 0-19 (25 with SEND).

3. Introduction to Family Hubs

3.1. Family Hubs is a support model for families with children and young people aged 0-19 (25 where children have a special educational need or disability). It is a way to think about how to better support families across the spectrum of Early Help (prevention, early intervention, additional needs) and more coherently enable families to access specialist services where needed.

3.2. Family hubs was a concept developed by the Centre for Social Justice (2014) which was explored by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (2016) who strongly concluded that redevelopment of Children's Centres towards a Family Hub model would make a real difference for families. Since then many local areas have looked to family hubs as a way of revising their Centres for example Essex, Shropshire and Isle of White.

3.3. The national policy agenda continues to move in this direction, (including with the recent budget announcement of funding for a number of Family Hubs). The Best Start in Life; modernisation of the Healthy Child Programme, Maternity Hubs, the Andra Leadson review Strengthening Families all are aligned with the values and principles of Family Hubs.

These key principles include:

- Integration
- Shared outcomes
- Working with the voluntary sector, embedded in community
- Focus on early intervention and prevention
- Whole family approach
- Accessibility

3.4. A Family Hub is not a prescribed range of services – it is an approach that seeks to offer families a more coherent and effective support offer across the services they need e.g. health services (antenatal, maternity, health visitor, school nurses); early years childcare & education, youth services, parenting support, safety, relationship support; employment, finance and other support that reflects local circumstances.

3.5. Family hubs can be located in existing physical spaces, upgraded spaces and/or blended with a digital offer.

3.6. Integrated leadership is also key to success through considering local needs, involving the right stakeholders (statutory and voluntary and community sector) and support systems, processes and culture change to achieve outcomes and measure impact/outcomes.

4. Stakeholder briefings and Consultations

4.1. Initial briefings and consultation have taken place with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and there was huge amount of support from participants to get it right for families. With consistent support for family hub concept (0-19), open at weekends/evenings, embedded in community and providing a better range and co-ordination of information and support for families. Key areas of interest highlighted by Stakeholders were:

- Potential in a blended offer - digital & face to face – to meet some of the issues posed by rurality and geographical scope [potential to build on what worked over last year, but not to rely on technology in rural areas as not good for all types of support].
- Post Covid statutory offer unclear as yet – opportunity to redefine as part of any new offer.
- Each locality is unique and any model will clearly need to flex to local issues and priorities – common interest in hub and satellite model (hub being locality based with outreach offered in local villages).
- Strong theme across all localities is a lack of universal and L2 support for families – current focus on L3 and above is perceived as ‘too little too late’ Any new models need to acknowledge existing stigma around targeted services.
- Large amount of social capital/community capacity (VCFS) that could be harnessed as part of a more cohesive offer for families [organisations and stakeholders such as grandparents]
- A need for much better communication and co-ordination across (and within) public services and the VCFS to work towards a more cohesive offer for families - strategically and locally [potential around family navigators/social prescribing]
- More use of data locally to drive improvement and more consistent systems in general
- Consistent support gaps across localities: pre- birth; /school readiness /EYFS attainment (FSM and ethnicity gaps higher than the national ; 11-19 (general activities, youth support & mental health); children with special needs (general lack of support & system bureaucratic); support for parents – particularly domestic violence & mental health (thresholds too high to pick up early enough).
- Consistent strength: early years support (2-5yrs) and childcare provision
- Workforce need to be able to work with whole family, including children with SEN and disabilities without losing specialisms; will need development & professionals need access to appropriate supervision and support (including education & VCFS workforce)
- Needs to be longer term commitment to any new model

In summary, by March 2024 our suggested model will comprise of;

- 16 Family Hubs, with a growing range of spokes including the 27 de-designated centres, with the potential to increase these spokes using other community assets, which are recognised as a single point of access, welcoming and for all families in the local community.
- A digital information and signposting offer will further support accessibility.
- Integrated leadership team driving forward integrated, co-located services and shared outcomes, at a minimum comprising the pre-birth-2 and Best Start for Life offers (in line with public health and primary health commissioning teams).
- Shared data system to facilitate an effective early help system (communication and evaluation).
- Embedded co-production structures and opportunities which build genuine capacity to ensure support is driven by and responsive to diverse local needs
- Co-location with community and voluntary sector support in line with local capacity and need
- A workforce with expectations to build relationships and support whole families, using strength-based approaches – where families are engaged from birth and get help at the earliest point.

5. Offer

5.1. Universal Offer

Our Universal Offer will be joined up and flexible to local need, to enable families to access support when they first need it. Our ambition is for Family Hubs to become the delivery model for Continuity of Carer, Babies in Lockdown, and Start for Life. In this way, Family Hubs will become a normal part of the family landscape and integral to the local communities they serve. They will engage families at the very start of their parenting journey (pre-birth), building relationships that will facilitate access to the right information and type/level of support – particularly in the critical early years.

6. We will integrate the six elements of a Universal Offer by providing:

6.1. Seamless support for families

Local maternity services will support delivery of the new Continuity of Carer (CoC) and our Baby Hubs model (Babies in Lockdown), so that midwives become central to Family Hubs. They will be a key part of the co-located integrated teams, which will drive the integration of health and public health priorities, early help and community assets, focused on meeting joint priorities and shared outcomes. Midwives will have smaller caseloads enabling them to build up trusting relationships. This means that they will be able to provide personalised care from conception. This will help with early identification of mental health, parenting or safeguarding issues or families likely to require elements of a universal plus offer, so that these can be flagged appropriately and in a timely way. The integrated information and data system will

also facilitate the seamless service we aspire to. The health visiting caseloads are aligned to the current boundaries of the Children and Families Centres. These boundaries will be reviewed as part of the development of Family Hub and spoke model to ensure that the boundaries are also coterminous with that of the CoC teams. Aligning boundaries also means that professionals working together in these smaller geographical areas will get to know each other, enabling effective communication and greater integration of the workforce.

6.2. As part of Gloucestershire's sufficiency strategy

We are building a new 6 bed residential parent and child assessment centre in county. This provision will be part of our family hub model as a new children centre will be integral to this development, offering some of our most vulnerable parents the community connections that a children's centre offers. Gloucestershire is a large rural county. Some localities having poor transport links. A strong message from the pre-engagement work indicated a need for a mix of face to face and virtual support to maximise engagement with and take up of the universal services provided. Consideration will be given to the sufficiency of existing childcare provision in the area so that the development of a children's centre provision does not impact on the business sustainability of local providers.

6.3. We aim to integrate Birth Registration services into our family hub model

This will help to breakdown the stigma of current children and family centres being for families with problems, alongside rebranding of children and family centres as family hubs (anticipated April 2023 subject to Cabinet approval). Furthermore our family hub with spokes will be in trusted community spaces which will feel accessible and welcoming for all families. Volunteers and staff will be trained in trauma informed practice to create a safe experience. Pre-engagement work has identified food/Café as key in creating a welcoming space and encouraging people to chat informally to share parenting experiences and form peer networks. Our aim is to co-produce an evolving family hubs model with parents and community organisations to continually understand what makes family hubs accessible and welcoming.

6.4. The Information families need when they need it

Family hubs and community spokes will be physical information hubs. Our digital offer will build from this, ensuring that families have 24/7 access to quality information to support informed decisions. We will promote existing Apps to maximise social media platforms and develop new ways to provide information that is accessible to all. Our information strategy will be a key focus of our co-production work, taking account of digital poverty.

6.5. Workforce development

We will develop the workforce through multi-agency training opportunities to strengthen links across the different professional groups. A training needs analysis will be undertaken which will inform the workforce development programme for staff and volunteers. We anticipate training needs will include early child development

trauma informed practice and building resilience , supporting children with SEN and disabilities, EYFS curriculum delivery to support the universal offer

7. EY Identified gaps for consideration within the Family Hubs specification

7.1. Early help for children and families – pre-birth to 3yrs

- Targeted PEEP groups/parent programmes for children referred by other agencies.
- Targeted parent engagement/support – for families identified through PEEP groups , community parent and baby/toddler and/or as part of the graduated pathway as an early intervention. To include parenting programmes and short term , outcome focussed support in the home , to support the “home as a learning environment” and modelling and support for parents to implement strategies etc.
- Perinatal support – to prepare for parenting and post natal support
- Promoting take up of 2-year-old funded EY education entitlement and Health visitor ASQ developmental reviews
- Provision of Easter/summer activities /support for young children and families – to ensure access to support for vulnerable children and families not known to other agencies/early help families , especially children who will start school in the Autumn to support transition/school readiness

7.2. A paper was presented to SLT (Sept 2021) to gauge internal leadership interest in family hubs as an approach for Gloucestershire. It was agreed that there was sufficient interest to explore options as to how the commissioning of Children and Family Centres could be conducted in this context.

7.3. The option currently being developed is an incremental model of change to establish a Family Hub offer for Gloucestershire which will start with the redesign of Children Centres.

Area in scope	Activity	Timeframe
Children Centres	Recommission the CC offer, moving back to a more universal/ prevention service, creating a core Family Hub within each district with wider bespoke services/ building.	Complete by April 2023
Public Health Nursing	Recommissioning of Health visiting services will be aligned to the new Family hub model	2023/4

	creating a more integrated place based offer	
Youth Services	Recommissioning of Youth provision will mirror the Place based approach to CC to create a joined up offer for families	2022/3
Health	Wider health service will be brought into the Family Hub offer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midwifery • Autism pathway • Obesity pathway • Early Bird parenting etc. • Emotional well being - perinatal mental health 	2022/3
Short Breaks offer	Inclusion of children and families with additional needs. Short breaks offer/ information will be part of the wider Family Hub offer	2022/3
Early Help	Map out links/ pathways and services like parenting programmes etc. to be part of the wider Family Hub offer	2022/3
Early Years	Mapping exercise to consider the wider Early Years offer and school readiness	2022/3
Other Areas to consider	Adult Education Housing DWP - Benefit advice Trauma informed / ACEs	

8. Governance - a sub group has been developed which will be reporting into the Child Friendly Gloucestershire coalition.

9. Next Steps

- Strategic vision and principles to be developed (CFC lead/timescale TBC)
- Overarching family hub model to be developed (CFC lead/timescale TBC)
- Informal provider engagement (November 2021) – explore potential and capacity for new ways of working /opportunities for involvement in design (GCC EH commissioning team lead)
- Role of Children and Family Centres within family hub model defined (including objectives within the broader outcomes frameworks) and implications for commissioning (in/out of scope) (Jan 2022) (CGG Integrated Children and

Families Commissioning Hub (level of partnership working with CFC dependent on option selected)

- The specification will be co-produced with the Early Years team to ensure outcome and impact measures are in line with the gaps in current provision to be funded from the DGS pot of funding to be agreed at EY/Schools Forum
- Cabinet paper: agree commissioning of children's centres within wider family hubs context (February Cabinet) (GCC Integrated Children and Families Commissioning Hub)
- Stakeholder Engagement (providers, families) (Feb 2022 – June 2022) (GCC Integrated Children and Families Commissioning Hub)
- Developing the service specification (Feb 2022 onwards) following cabinet approval of the paper

10. Funding

The current investment from Designated School Grant is £1,048,758. This currently provides funding towards the targeted family support service as a contribution to the support this service provides for children and their families under 5.

This level of service transformation requires a longer-term commitment. An incremental approach of 3 years will be needed to ensure alignment of the key services needed to support children and their families 0-19/25 for the full development of Family Hubs therefore we are seeking a contract of 7 years with a further option to extend for up to a 2 year period.

The 7 year contract will allow the first 3 years to develop the Family Hubs model and the latter 4 years to embed this model with an option to extend if needed beyond the 7 years for up to a further 2 years.

11. Action needed

To seek from Early Years Forum a commitment for the DGS funding of £1,048,758 be made available for the period of the contracts to contribute to the development of Family Hubs across Gloucestershire.

Approval given 26th January from EY Forum

Following approval from Early Years Forum of the DGS funding commitment for the lifetime of the Family Hubs contract as set out in this document a further agreement was reached with the forum to include

- EY Sector representation being part of the stakeholder group
- EY Forum to have an active voice in the development of the specification both as part of the reference group but also as an agenda item at future meetings of the forum

- Engagement in the monitoring of outcomes once the contracts have been awarded through EY Forum as an agenda item.

This approach provides an opportunity to recommission Children and Family Centres within a longer-term vision for Family Hubs. It allows us the flexibility and time to work with partners to develop the “whole Family Hub” model, which is not possible within the timescales for commissioning Children and Family Centres. An incremental approach will enable alignment with GCC transformation programmes and multi-agency working. This approach will also allow the development of an integrated leadership approach and will seek to lever in funding from wider agencies as part of the vision for Family Hubs as an integrated multi-agency model. This incremental approach to commissioning will be tested throughout the procurement process. A contract with a longer lifetime is in line with national practice which suggests longer term commitment to funding is needed to evidence outcomes, impact and efficiencies within Early Help.

12. Action needed

To seek from Schools Forum a commitment for the DGS funding of £1,048,758 be made available for the period of the contracts to contribute to the development of Family Hubs across Gloucestershire.