

TITLE OF REPORT: **Acceptance and Use of Family Hubs and Start for Life Funding**

REPORT OF: **Helen Fergusson, Strategic Director,
Children’s Social Care and Lifelong Learning**

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Cabinet of the receipt of Family Hubs and Start for Life grant funding and request the use of delegated authority to allow the programme to be delivered, in line with the requirements of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide and the funding agreement.

Background

2. The Government has allocated £301.75 million Family Hubs and Start for Life programme funding package to 75 upper tier local authority areas for the period 2022-2025.
3. The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme is jointly overseen by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE).
4. This investment will enable the nominated local authorities to transform their services into a family hub model. The programme also includes new investment in the crucial Start for Life period from conception to age two, and services which support parents to care for and interact with their children. Funding is also available for early language and the home learning environment (HLE) to support educational recovery and the school readiness of children who were babies during the pandemic.
5. The programme represents a significant step forward in delivering on the Government’s commitments as set out in [The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days)
6. It will also deliver on the Government’s manifesto commitment to champion family hubs. Supporting babies, children and families across the country in this way is a crucial part of the Government’s ambition to level up.
7. Family Hubs offer support to families from conception to age two and to those with children of all ages, which is 0-19 or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with a great Start for Life offer at their core.

8. Gateshead Council will receive between £2,995,000 and £3,085,00 in total over the 3 years with the breakdown for the funded strands as follows:

Strand	%	2022/23	2023/24		2024/25		Total	
			Lower Range	Upper Range	Lower Range	Upper Range	Lower Range	Upper Range
Family hubs programme (transformation)	19.9	147,857	243,178	253,128	204,970	212,930	596,005	613,915
Family hubs capital	5.0	37,150	61,100	63,600	51,500	53,500	149,750	154,250
Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships	31.1	231,073	380,042	395,592	320,330	332,770	931,445	959,435
Parenting support	14.6	108,478	178,412	185,712	150,380	156,220	437,270	450,410
Infant feeding support	17.5	130,025	213,850	222,600	180,250	187,250	524,125	539,875
Home learning environment services	7.9	58,697	96,538	100,488	81,370	84,530	236,605	243,715
Publishing 'Start for Life' offers and Parent and Carer Panels	4.0	29,720	48,880	50,880	41,200	42,800	119,800	123,400
	100.0	743,000	1,222,000	1,272,000	1,030,000	1,070,000	2,995,000	3,085,000

9. Conditions of this funding are that we will deliver the minimum expectations as described in the programme guide by the end of the programme (March 2025) for:

- The family hubs transformation funding
- The funded services and initiatives – parenting support, parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health support, early language and home learning environment, infant feeding support, parent and carer panels and publishing the start for life offer
- Wider 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND) services that will be delivered through the family hub model but will not receive additional investment through this programme

10. Specifically, the funded strands cover the following requirements:

- Develop/deliver a network of Family Hubs to support the process of moving to a Family Hub model or to develop existing Family Hub model further, putting the baby, child, and family at the centre (more accessible, better connected and more relationship centred)
- Develop/deliver bespoke parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health support (mild to moderate) to promote positive early relationships and good mental wellbeing for babies and their families
- Develop/deliver/expand infant feeding support services to design and deliver a blended offer of advice and support that will help all mothers to understand the benefits of breastfeeding and meet their infant feeding goals
- Develop/deliver/expand parenting support to facilitate services to help all new and expectant parents make the transition to new parenthood as smooth as possible

- Publish a clear 'Start for Life offer' setting-out the services and support available to families in local area during the 1,001 critical days
- Set up parent/carer panels and ensure that parents' and carers' voices are heard in the design, planning and delivery of services
- Deliver training for practitioners to support parents with the home learning environment to aid early years educational recovery

11. In addition to the funded strands, mentioned in paragraph 10, Family Hubs will develop a wider offer which includes minimum expectations for:

- Midwifery and health visiting services
- Birth registration
- Activities for children aged 0-5 years
- Nutrition and weight management
- Stop smoking support
- Oral health improvement
- Substance misuse support
- Youth and youth justice services
- Reducing parental conflict
- Domestic abuse support
- Housing
- Parenting support
- SEND support and services
- Debt and welfare advice
- Early childhood education and care and financial support
- Intensive targeted family support services
- Mental health (beyond start for life perinatal mental health)
- Support for separating and separated parents

12. It should be noted that in relation to minimum expectations for both the funded and non-funded strands there are 3 areas that are covered:

- Service available face to face at a family hub
- Service available through the family hub but received elsewhere in the network
- Virtual services available through the family hubs, including static online information and/or interactive virtual services

13. The Grant has been issued by DfE under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them to deliver the expectations set out in the [Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) and the obligations set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Secretary of State and each of the 75 local authorities to which grants are to be paid.

Proposal

14. It is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning, to enter into such funding agreements, as will be required following consultation with the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

and the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance in order to progress the transfer of funding from the DfE to the Council, as outlined in this report.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Approve the acceptance of Family Hubs and Start for Life grant funding for the purposes outlined in this report.
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning, to enter into such funding agreements as necessary, following consultation with the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital and the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance, to facilitate the allocation and spend of the grant in line with the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide and our agreed delivery plan.

For the following reason(s)

To transform our services into a family hub model and improve the health and development outcomes for babies, children and their families ensuring every family receives the support they need, when they need it. All families will have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing.

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Policy Context

1. As outlined in the Council Strategic Approach, Thrive, we want to help our communities not just survive, but to flourish, prosper and succeed. We have committed to five pledges to help and guide us when we make decisions. These are:
 - Putting people and families at the heart of everything we do
 - Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
 - Support communities to support themselves and to support each other
 - Invest in our economy to provide opportunities for employment, innovation and growth
 - Work together to fight for a better future for Gateshead
2. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been adopted as the overarching delivery mechanism for Thrive. Its evidence-based strategic policy objectives aim to address the wider determinants of health through a place-based approach. They include:
 - Give every child the best start in life, with a focus on conception to age two
 - Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
 - Create the conditions for fair employment and good work for all
 - Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
 - Create and develop sustainable places and communities
 - Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention

Background

3. All families need support at different times of the life course from professional, family or community networks. Local services, working together and in partnership with the voluntary, community and faith sectors, all have a vital role to play in supporting families. Professionals often face practical and organisational barriers to working together. Organisational geographical boundaries do not always align when it comes to delivery of services, which can restrict or delay families' access to services. Improving 'join-up' between statutory, formal and informal services and taking a whole-family approach better supports families to access the help they need.
4. Family hubs are a place-based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services. They bring services together to improve access, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family support. Family hubs offer support to families from conception and two, and to those with children of all ages, which is 0-19 or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core.
5. The Family Hub model is underpinned by three key principles: Access, Connection and Relationships.

Access:

- There is a clear, simple way for families with children of all ages to access help and support through a Family Hub building and/or a Family Hub approach

Connection:

- Services work together for families, with a universal 'front door', shared outcomes and effective governance
- Professionals work together through co-location, data-sharing and a common approach to their work. Families only have to tell their story once
- Statutory services and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners work together to get families the help they need

Relationships:

- The Family Hub prioritises relationships and builds on family strengths
- A relational approach is at the heart of everything that is delivered in Family Hub.

6. Following a review into improving health and development outcomes for babies in England, led by Dame Andrea Leadsom MP, 'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days' report was published in March 2021. The report highlighted that the services offered to families in the critical period between conception and age two are often disjointed, making it hard for those who need help to navigate the support available to them.
7. The report committed to six action areas, focused on ensuring families have access to the support they need, and the Start for Life system is working together to provide that support:

Ensuring families have access to the services they need:

- **Seamless support for families:** a coherent joined up Start for Life offer available to all families
- **A welcoming hub for families:** Family Hubs as a place for families to access Start for Life services
- **The information families need when they need it:** designing digital, virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family

Ensuring the Start for Life system is working together to give families the support they need:

- **An empowered Start for Life workforce:** developing a modern skilled workforce to meet the changing needs of families
- **Continually improving the Start for Life offer:** improving data, evaluation, outcomes and proportionate inspection
- **Leadership for change:** ensuring local and national accountability and building the economic case

8. The Gateshead Early Help Strategy (2022-25) includes the implementation of Family Hubs as a key strategic priority to improve families' access to universal and targeted services in locality settings. Family Hubs are also consistent with the

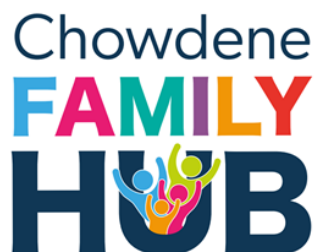
national (DLUHC) vision for early help which expects that public services, “work together in place-based or hub-based working, where partners are integrated virtually or physically, based in the community with a common footprint”; (Early Help System Guide, Supporting Families Programme). Furthermore, the Local Authority should consider and plan for the recommendations set-out in the Independent review of children’s social care (May 2022), in particular; “Family Help should be delivered by multidisciplinary teams, embedded in neighbourhoods, harnessing the power of community assets and tailored to local needs.

Progress to date and delivery plan key areas

9. A Family Hubs and Start for Life Steering Group has been established which includes key partners/stakeholders to take forward and develop the key action areas, and to deliver the requirements of the programme guidance and the Family Hub Model Framework. The Strategic Director, Children’s Social Care and Lifelong Learning chairs the group with support from the Director of Public Health. The terms of reference have been agreed for the steering group, which is directly accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
10. An initial multi-agency workshop took place in July 2022 as part of the Family Hub development process to build consensus on the need for change, and to ensure that the development of our local Family Hub model will have a sound evidence base and be clearly defined based on population needs. This included presentation of data profiles (Gateshead outcomes) for the topic areas of the Family Hub core offer – for example, breastfeeding rates.
11. The formal sign-up process was completed by 30 October 2022 deadline, and the delivery plan was submitted by 30 December 2022 deadline. The delivery plan was assessed by a national panel and accepted as meeting level 2 criteria (satisfactory) at the end of January 2023. Any changes to the delivery plan must be agreed nationally by DfE and the DHSC. We are now working towards achieving level 3 criteria (strong). A summary of some of the proposals in the delivery plan, which were agreed by the steering group, and included in our delivery plan, is given below in paragraphs 13 to 21.
12. As we were not able to progress all the proposals until the delivery plan was signed off by the national panel this has resulted in underspend in year 1. However, following negotiation with our regional DfE support lead we have agreement that they are content that our delivery remains on track to achieve the milestones set out over the full programme. They share our commitment in ensuring these funds achieve the most return for the families in our area and will not, therefore, be looking to claw back any unspent funds, at this time, at the end of the 22/23 financial year. They expect these funds to be spent on programme objectives in year 2 of the programme.
13. We will re-purpose the existing Children’s Centre estate under new Family Hub and Start for Life branding, re-launching our centres at Deckham (Elgin Road), Chowdene (Waverley Road), Blaydon/Winlaton (Shibdon Bank) and Birtley (Harras Bank) as Family Hubs in the first half of 2023, in line with programme/milestone expectations.

14. Centres at Felling (High Street) and Teams (Rose Street) will follow in the second half of 2023, while partnership sites at Leam Lane (Cotemedede) and Wrekenton Hub (High Street) are also within scope to host a Family Hub offer.
15. External signage is being developed will reflect the new Family Hub branding which is based on the 'Thrive' graphics and colour palette as shown in figure 1 below

Figure 1



16. We will build on the already excellent standard of facilities at Children's Centre and Council Hub sites and develop more breastfeeding-friendly spaces, rooms for confidential discussions and for group activities. We plan to increase staff capacity at the four main Family Hub sites, creating bespoke 'Start for Life' fixed-term roles to support the initial phase of programme implementation.
17. We will identify Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) assets in three or four communities of highest need where a Family Hub facility is not available and a further two assets with known experience and expertise in engaging with targeted cohorts of families. We will fund staff capacity in these VCS assets, aligned to the Family Hub network, to deliver aspects of the Start for Life and core Family Hub offer. VCS colleagues will have access to a comprehensive, funded training offer to help provide an informed family support function and to know how and when to connect families to more specialist services across the Family Hub network.
18. For parenting and perinatal mental health support, we will expand access to evidence-based interventions and increase the offer of peer support for parents with mild to moderate mental health difficulties, particularly fathers and co-parents, including in VCS settings. We will expand the baby box scheme that is being delivered by the Children's Foundation "Make a Million" project to support new parents who are identified as being vulnerable or needing extra support to build and strengthen the relationship between parents and their baby. We will ensure that all staff in the family hubs and the wider children and families workforce, including VCS, receive training to ensure they are skilled to have sensitive, inclusive conversations with parents and carers and can offer advice and refer into services if required.
19. A multi-disciplinary infant feeding strategy will be developed based on the North East and North Cumbria Local Maternity Services (NENC LMS) Infant Feeding Strategy and this will include touchpoint pathways that have been developed regionally by the NENC LMS. We will introduce an Infant Feeding Support Team, increasing the capacity to deliver specialist feeding advice. We have purchased infant feeding equipment for our Family Hubs and Health Visiting Team and will develop new information products.

20. We will train sections of our early years, SEND and related workforces to deliver evidence-based interventions to improve the pre-school home learning environment for children aged 3-4 years.

21. The Start for Life offer is hosted by the main Gateshead Council website and has been published in early April 2023, alongside updated designated social media platforms. The portal will link closely with the online SEND Local Offer, Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) and Family Information Service (FIS) pages and connect to the full range of partnership host content which details the Start for Life offer.

Consultation

22. Consultation has taken place with the Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and Health and Wellbeing.

Alternative Options

23. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

24. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that the additional funding will provide resources to develop the Family Hubs network across the borough and increase the support available for families in the Start for Life period. The funding will also enable support to parents with the home learning environment to aid early years educational recovery.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no Human Resource implications arising directly from this report.
- c) **Property Implications** - There are no Property implications as the current Children’s Centre building will be repurposed as main Family Hub buildings

25. Risk Management Implication - There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

26. Equality and Diversity Implications - Receipt of this funding will enable action on health inequalities, focused on young parents, fathers and co-parents and those who would not normally access current Children’s Centre provision.

27. Crime and Disorder Implications – There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

28. Health Implications - Potential for health benefits for Gateshead families and their children by providing additional support in the 1,001 critical days period around infant feeding, peri-natal mental health, and parenting support.

29. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - There are no climate emergency or sustainability implications arising from this report.

30. Human Rights Implications - There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

31. Ward Implications – There are no ward implications arising directly from this report.