

**TITLE OF REPORT: FAMILY HUBS & START FOR LIFE UPDATE**

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**1. Purpose of the Report**

To seek the views of the Health & Wellbeing Board on the implementation of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme.

**2. How does the report support Gateshead's Health & Wellbeing Strategy?**

The Family Hubs and Start for Life offer will have a direct impact on the six policy objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy through the provision of (a) an integrated support offer to families with dependent children and (b) an all-age menu of help and advice for people of all ages, regardless of family composition.

**3. Background**

The Government (Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education – DHSC and DfE) has allocated £301.75 million over the next three financial years to enable 75 Upper-Tier Local Authorities in England to deliver a package of family support and Start for Life services.

**4. This includes funding for:**

- **Bespoke parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health support** – to promote positive early relationships and good mental wellbeing for babies and their families;
- **A network of Family Hubs** – to support the process of moving to a Family Hub model or to develop an existing Family Hub model further, putting the baby, child and family at the centre;
- **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;
- **Parenting support** – to facilitate services to help all new and expectant parents make the transition to new parenthood as smooth as possible;
- **A clear 'Start for Life' offer** setting-out the services and support available to families in the local area during the 1,001 critical days;
- **Parent/carer panels** and ensure that parents' and carers' voices are heard in the design, planning and delivery of services;
- **The home learning environment** to aid early years educational recovery.

**5. Gateshead Council has been notified that it is eligible for funding from the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, subject to confirmation that we can deliver the programme's requirements, and has received an indicative funding allocation (2022-2025) of between £2,995,000 to £3,085,000. This includes a transformation**

element to fund the change process, including costs associated with project development, communications, local needs assessment activities and minor building refurbishments.

6. The funding will also enable us to take forward the recommendations in *The Best Start for Life (A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days)* review report. The report highlighted that the services offered to families in the critical period between conception and age 2 are often disjointed, making it difficult for those who need help to navigate the support available to them. The report committed to six action areas, focused on ensuring families have access to the support they need, and to ensure 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.
7. Family Hubs can also act as anchor points for a wide range of services to connect with communities and should support the development of locality plans which reflect the priorities of people living within our neighbourhoods. Family Hubs are about early intervention and prevention, are complementary to current and emerging locality work and can only operate effectively within a strong, joined-up system of placed-based help.

8. The Family Hub model is underpinned by three key principles:

#### **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 Hubs.
9. The development of a Family Hub should involve key stakeholders in the local area across health, social care, education and VCS organisations, and it should be representative of the 0–19 age range and 0-25 range for SEND. In addition to the funded strands, Family Hubs will develop a wider offer which can include support for:
- Midwifery and health visiting services
  - Activities for children aged 0-5 years
  - Nutrition and weight management
  - Smoking cessation
  - Oral health
  - Substance misuse
  - Youth and youth justice services
  - Reducing parental conflict
  - Domestic abuse
  - Housing
  - Debt
  - Early childhood education
  - Intensive family intervention and safeguarding services
  - Mental health

## **10. Progress**

Actions completed to date can be summarised as:

- Formal sign-up progress completed by 30 October 2022 deadline;
- Delivery Plan submitted by 30 December 2022 deadline – summary of proposals is given below;
- Family Hub branding developed – based on ‘Thrive’ concept/design;
- Expanding co-location of community midwifery services to more Family Hub sites – already located at two centres;
- Working with Digital/Communications colleagues to develop the Start for Life offer;
- Ongoing consultation with the Family Hubs & Start for Life Steering Group and wider partners.

## **11. Proposal**

Our delivery model can be summarised as:

- We will seek to 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 before 31 March 2023 and in line with programme/milestone expectations. 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.

- Centres at Felling (High Street) and Teams (Rose Street) will follow in July 2023, while partnership sites at Leam Lane (Cotemedede) and Wrekenton Hub (High Street) are also within scope to host a Family Hub offer.
- We will identify VCS assets in 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. We will also commission a VCS organisation to provide a co-ordination and oversight function for the aligned network of VCS spokes operating under a clear MOU detailing role and function.
- We will develop bespoke, nurturing spaces at our sites for confidential discussions and group activities, plus feeding-friendly areas. We will also scope the potential for birth registrations to take place at Family Hub locations.
- For parenting, perinatal mental health and infant feeding support, we will expand access to evidence-based interventions and significantly increase the offer of peer support opportunities for parents, including in VCS settings. We will develop an Infant Feeding Strategy, develop a dedicated Infant Feeding Support Team and simplify support pathways, increasing the capacity to deliver specialist feeding advice.
- We will expand our GP attachment pilot and fund feeding equipment, plus Hope and Baby Boxes, while increasing co-ordination capacity.
- We will train our early years and SEND workforces in evidence-based interventions to improve the pre-school home learning environment.
- The Start for Life offer will be hosted by the main Gateshead Council website and published in March 2023 alongside 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 partnership contribution to the Start for Life and Family Hub offer.

## **12. Next Steps**

- Develop the Delivery Plan to evidence the Level 3 assessment criteria set by DHSC/DFE;
- Deliver the key opening milestones (centres) and publish the Start for Life offer before 31 March 2023;
- Return the initial Management Information (MI) and Maturity Self-Assessment (MSA) exercise by week ending 17 March 2023;
- Consider nomination to become a 'Super Evaluator' in Spring 2023 to participate in more in-depth research with DHSC/DFE.

### **13. Recommendations**

- The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider the proposal for implementation of a Family Hub and Start for Life programme in Gateshead.

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