

TITLE OF REPORT: Update – Early Help Strategy

REPORT OF: Helen Fergusson – Director of Children’s Social Care & Lifelong Learning

Summary

This report provides a summary of progress made with delivery of the Gateshead Early Help Strategy 2023-26.

1. Background

The Gateshead Early Help Strategy 2023 – 26 was approved by Cabinet in April 2023 with two main priorities:

- (a) Make it easier to get the right help, including the roll-out of a Family Hub network and Start for Life Offer across 2023-26.
- (b) Increase our focus on family relationships, including an expansion of programmes and interventions to improve family stability.

The Strategy complements the Council’s Thrive framework and the Gateshead Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy Priorities – especially the focus on *giving every child the best start in life*.

2. Progress Update: Family Hubs & Start for Life

Transformation Strand

- Total of 9 Family Hubs operational – includes a new Wrekenton site from March 2024.
- Increased frontline capacity by 252 hours per week (53%) – Autumn Spending Review confirms continuation of grant into 2025/26.
- Work out of 12 outreach (VCSF) locations.
- Commission 6 VCSF providers, including a virtual Family Hub for the Jewish community.
- Total of 43 services and organisations are delivering out of the Family Hub estate.
- Comprehensive communications plan in place covering social media, radio, public spaces.
- Birth registration pilot evaluation completed in Summer 2024 – now an established offer.
- Co-location of maternity services has doubled from 2 to 4 Family Hubs.
- Refurbishment of all centres, including new outdoor and sensory facilities.

- Annual footfall of 4,800 children and 4,200 adults accessing support in Family Hubs in the last 12 months.

Parenting Strand

- Introduced a new Triple P Baby programme.
- Broadened facilitator pool for Incredible Years Babies programme.
- Launched a Dads & Male Carers Offer (July 2024).
- Grant contribution to regional (NEYDL) Minoritised Fathers Worker post.

Perinatal Mental Health & Parent-Infant Relationship Strand

- Recruited Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support Workers.
- Recruited Specialist Health Visitor - Perinatal Mental Health for 12 months.
- Issued 211 Baby Boxes – new NECA funding (Child Poverty Strand) will expand this offer.

Infant Feeding Strand

- Recruited Infant Feeding Team – IFT Co-ordinator role and peer support workers.
- Feeding kit and resources purchased for loan and donation, including breast pumps.

Home Learning Environment (HLE) Strand

- First and Early Words Together (National Literacy Trust) programmes being delivered.
- Hosted visit from the CEO of the NLT in June 2024 – HLE work features as a national case study on the Anna Freud NCFH portal.
- Incredible Years Autism & Language Delay programme to be delivered from Autumn 2024.

Parent/Carer Panel Strand – Family Voice

- Designated PCP Co-ordinator role in place.
- Total of 63 active members of PCP – meetings held at all 9 Family Hub sites.
- Workplan has included re-design of outdoor spaces and family support offer.
- PCP members attended the Early Help Board in May 2024.

3. Family Help Conversations

- First phase evaluation completed with 28 families.
- Plan to upscale FHC model and align with new mental health pathways.
- Pilot of school-based parenting support (ADHD) completed at Swalwell – model expanded to 3 further schools.

4. Youth Provision & Youth Crime Prevention

- New Youth Lead appointed in July 2024 – Caroline Evans.
- Delivery of Turnaround Programme – exceeded March 2025 target of 92 successful family outcomes.

5. SEND Short Breaks & Holiday Programmes – Summer 2024

- 905 children from 732 families at 9 Family Hubs attending 166 family activities.
- 360 children – 218 with SEND – attended Short Break and HAF provision over 108 days (2,570 places).

6. Governance - Early Help System & Prevention Board

- Operational from September 2023 with agreed Terms of Reference.
- Provides strategic oversight of the Gateshead Early Help Strategy.
- Developed a partnership Early Help System Dashboard of measures on outcomes for children and families.

7. Recommendations

- The Families OSC is asked to consider the contents of this report and to receive further updates.

Contact: Gavin Bradshaw
gavinbradshaw@gateshead.gov.uk

E-Mail: