

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Joanne Stewart , Head of Early Help and Support
Date of Meeting:	21 September 2023

EARLY HELP STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To report on the Early Help Strategy and the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For scrutiny committee to consider the Early Help Strategy and approach in supporting the partnership and the development of Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The Early Help strategy is key to improving outcomes for children and families in Blackpool and, reducing the demand on higher level services, for the Council and its partner agencies. There is much research around the better outcomes for children and families if we support earlier and the cost benefits of working in this way.

3.2 The development of Family Hubs and the Start for Life offer will be central to Early Help strategy going forward.

3.4 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.5 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is
Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information -

- 6.1 The Early Help Strategy was launched in November 2021 and draws on the Early Help System Guide developed through the Governments Supporting Families programme (formerly called Troubled Families) which sits in the Levelling Up department. (Appendix 7b)
- 6.2 The strategy focuses on how we (the Council and the Partnership) support children, young people and their families who need a more co-ordinated response to support them as problems arise and before they need higher levels of support.
- 6.3 This Early Help Strategy sets out that early help is everyone's responsibility and the way in which we should work with families who need help.
- 6.4 Strong partnership working is key to the success of the strategy and there has been good support from across the partnership for this development.
 - 6.4.1 The strategy is owned by the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership. This multiagency group supported the development of the strategy and have received regular updates on its progress
 - 6.4.2 Initially a multiagency steering group focused on leading early help work, chaired by the DCS brought together a group of senior leaders to support the implementation of the strategy. This is now being replaced by a multiagency Early Help Strategic Operational group.
 - 6.4.3 Three new job roles, Early Help Link Workers, have been implemented in the Councils formal family support service. These roles are designed to support any would be lead professional in any organisation to undertake an early help assessment and develop a plan with a family. The main area of focus to date has been with school colleagues, where initially workers made contact with schools to offer support. There has been a lot of positive feedback about the support that these workers have offered and now schools partners are actively seeking support from the team. A Better Start currently fund an additional three posts to support those partners who work with children in their early years.
 - 6.4.4 An Early Help Workshop has been developed that aims to build a better understanding of the strategy and how as a lead professional you undertake an early help assessment and plan with a family along with how to bring a range of professionals together as a team around a family to support them. To date 400 people have attended a workshop to date, which will continue to be rolled out regularly.
 - 6.4.5 Implementing this strategy fully and seeing its impact will take time, it isn't a quick fix. Working in this way requires partners to build ownership and see this as part of their work not an additional task as it is perhaps feels now. This version of the strategy has been about building a firm base to build on. The next iteration will be detailed in the coming months to celebrate progress and look to take us further in the ambition to ensure that more children

and families are supported early and have an offer of early help before a referral for high levels of support.

- 6.4.6 There has been an increase in families supported by the Council's Family Support Team but as yet we cannot see all the work held by partners. Work is underway to develop a way of collecting early help work centrally to allow us to draw a range of data together (number of children supported, by whom and their outcomes) to be able to celebrate the progress as well as offer challenge where partners aren't using an early help approach.

6.5 **Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer**

- 6.5.1 In 2020 Dame Andrea Leadsom MP chaired a review into improving health and development outcomes for babies in England. 'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days' report was published in March 2021 (Appendix 7c).
- 6.5.2 75 upper tier local authorities in England were pre-selected to take part in the programme were announced in April 2022, Blackpool was invited as one of the 75 to take part in the programme. The Early Help and Support Service worked closely with a wide range of partners, particularly with A Better Start, to co-ordinate an expression of interest, which was successful. This development is key to the ongoing development of our Early Help Strategy and approach.
- 6.5.3 The programme is jointly overseen by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE). There is a set of detail guidance that sets out the requirements of Family Hubs and the what the Start for Life Offer should look like (See Appendices 7d, 7e and 7f).
- 6.5.4 Family hubs are for families with babies, children and young people from birth until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities). The programme emphasises the importance of the first 1,001 days, or the 'start for life period' (from conception to age two) for laying important foundations for children's emotional and physical development and ensuring parents and carers can give their children the best possible start in life.
- 6.5.5 Family hubs bring together multiple organisations in a 'one stop shop' with the aim of making it easier for families to access help and support. Partners should work together in a joined-up way to deliver the right help at the right time.
- 6.5.6 The funding made available through the programme is aimed at developing existing buildings or places, developing branding, digital working and staffing to support the work. The vast majority is however focused on the development of key elements of the Start for Life offer:
- *Parenting Support* – developing evidence based parenting groups, one to one support for those who need it, access to good information, advice and guidance in the hub or

on line.

- *Home learning environment /Speech and Language* - supporting parents to understand and provide learning opportunities at home and out in communities to support early development particularly focused on the development of speech and language.
- *Infant Feeding* – focus on increasing breastfeeding but supporting families who choose bottle feeding to do so safely
- *Parent infant relationships and mental health* – support for emotional health a well-being before and after the birth of baby for mothers and fathers and working to build positive early relationships.
- *Parent and Carer panels* – family voice and co-production is at the heart of the programme. These panels will bring together groups of parents who will shape and influence how services are developed and delivered through hubs, and their feedback will be used to drive improvement
- *Publishing the offer*- making sure that families know about family hubs and crucially the start for life offer, in hard copy materials and digitally

6.5.7 The wider range of services family hubs should have available are funded through existing funding streams such as council budgets, public health grants, ICB funding streams with family hubs tasked with working with partners to deliver these in family hubs or to have strong links and knowledge about services to be able to support families to access the support :

- Activities for children aged 0-5 Birth registration
- Debt and welfare advice
- Domestic Abuse Support
- Early Years Education Funding
- Health Visiting
- Housing
- Intensive targeted family support
- 0-19 public health services
- Mental Health services
- Midwifery and maternity services
- Nutrition and weight management
- Oral health improvement
- Reducing Parental Conflict
- SEND support and services
- Stop Smoking support
- Substance misuse (support alcohol/drug)
- Support for separating and separated parents
- Youth Justice services
- Youth services—universal and targeted

6.5.8 Blackpool will receive £2.8 million over the three years of the Family Hub and Start for Life programme April 2022 to March 2025 for the development of Family Hubs and the Start for life offer.

6.5.9 There are three Family Hubs in Blackpool, all of which were launched on the 13th and 14th of

July 2023, one for each locality and open to all children and families in Blackpool:

- North Family Hub (formerly Grange Park Childrens Centre)
- Central Family Hub (formerly Talbot and Brunswick Children’s Centre (TAB))
- South Family Hub – (at Palatine Leisure Centre – this was planned to be at Revoe school, however the accommodation at that site would allow us to deliver full offer, hence the move)

6.5.10 There are also have a number of additional sites that we are working with formally (in that we rent space at the building) or informally (either at no cost or where we pay as and when we use the building) including our former children centre sites. Families can access any Family Hub it doesn’t need to be the one near where they live.

6.5.11 There is a strong partnership working to develop the family hub offer, which will build on the work of Childrens Centre, A Better Start and Public Health have done and continue to do. There is a strong commitment across partners to develop hubs to be the places where families access help and support in their community.

6.5.12 Parent Carer panels have been recruited to and working with the Co-Production and Lived Experience team in the next quarter we will develop these to be in a position to drive service delivery further and help to shape how services are delivered in the future.

6.5.13 The start for Life Offer is for the most part in place, seeing the new funding used to enhance or extend existing commissions lead by Public Health or A Better Start or the introduction of new services where gaps were identified. Almost all of the wider service offer is in place and taking place in the Family Hubs, this again has been support through strong partnerships working and partners willing to consider the Family Hub guidance and how they might shape their delivery to fit with the guidance or ways they can develop their service further.

6.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 7(a): Early Help Strategy
Appendix 7(b): Early Help System Guide
Appendix 7(c): The Best Start for Life: A Vision
Appendix 7(d): Family Hubs and Start for Life
Appendix 7(e): Family Hub Model Framework
Appendix 7(f): Family Hub and Service Expectations

7.0 Financial considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Legal considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Risk management considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people:

10.1 The Early Help Strategy and approach is available to all children, young people and their families in Blackpool regardless of any protected characteristics.

11.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.