

# FAMILY HUBS STRATEGY AND EARLY YEARS NURSERIES UPDATE REPORT

<b>Committee name</b>	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Claire Fry, Assistant Director, Child and Family Support Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	2023-24 Family Hubs and Children's Centre Annual Report
<b>Ward</b>	All

## HEADLINES

This report outlines the progress made in implementing the Family Hubs strategy, following public consultation and its approval by the Cabinet in September 2023. Additionally, it provides an update on steps undertaken to identify an alternative supplier from the childcare market to ensure continued childcare services at the Council's early years nurseries.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the Committee notes the report.**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Family Hubs Overview and Background

1. Family Hubs offer information, advice, and guidance for families with children aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for SEND) on various family, relationship, health, and other issues. They provide a central access point for integrated family services.
2. The DfE commissioned the Anna Freud Centre to support the national delivery of Family Hubs. The program ensures a coordinated approach to services for ages 0-19, with a strong focus on supporting families with babies and young children through the Start for Life offer, which includes access to maternity and health services, as well as parenting support and conflict reduction.
3. Although Hillingdon did not receive funding in the initial phase, the Council has committed to developing a network Family Hub across the borough to support the coordinated delivery of services to children, young people, and their families across the 0-19 age range and has developed a strategy to support this work.
4. A 12-week public consultation was conducted between May and July 2023. The results were subsequently presented to the Cabinet in September, leading to the ratification of the Family Hub strategy.
5. In February 2024, the service hosted a visit to Uxbridge Family Hub by Dame Andrea Leadsom, author of the Early Years Healthy Development Review Report - The Best Start for Life, to present our Start for Life offer. Feedback from the visit was hugely positive and highlighted our all-age integrated service delivery model.

### Progress Against the Strategy

6. The Family Hub Delivery Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the

strategy. The group comprises representatives from various partner Council services, including Youth Services, Libraries, and Stronger Communities, as well as representatives from Health and the wider community, including Healthwatch, Hillingdon's Interfaith Group, and Homestart.

7. A communication strategy has been created to promote Family Hubs to children, young people, and their families. The Council's website information was refreshed, and various marketing materials, including banners, fliers, and Facebook adverts, were developed using the Family Hub graphic and colour scheme. A short film showcasing available services was produced ([Family hubs and children's centres - Hillingdon Council](#)), and the Start for Life offer was published in accordance with DfE guidelines ([Start for Life - Hillingdon Council](#)). Articles also featured in Hillingdon People to inform residents about these services.
8. Furthermore, a comprehensive 0-19 service directory is currently being developed. This directory will outline the services available throughout the borough for children, young people, and families. It will allow residents to search for community services, either locally or for specific support related to particular needs or concerns.
9. Following the establishment of the Uxbridge Family Hub, a second Family Hub was opened at the Hayes Campus of HRU College in January 2024. This included the relocation of children's centre services from nearby Barra Hall. Initially intended to be phased, the transfer was expedited due to storm damage over the Christmas period that rendered the building unusable, necessitating a prompt relocation of services operational from early January.
10. Hayes Family Hub offers various spaces designed for different uses: play and learning areas for young children, therapeutic workspaces, a clinical area for midwifery and health clinics, multipurpose spaces suitable for young people's activities or adult and community learning, and a kitchen equipped for cooking activities. There is also an outdoor area for safe access to outdoor activities. The Hub also provides children, young people, and their families with access to a wide range of services supporting health and well-being, delivered by partners from Youth Services, Health, and the Voluntary sector.
11. In accordance with the strategy, services at Barra Hall, Cowley, and McMillan Children's Centres have ceased, with services being relocated to nearby centres or Family Hubs. Work is ongoing to develop the second phase of Family Hubs, focusing on the Platinum Jubilee Leisure Centre, scheduled to open in September 2025.
12. Draft plans for the proposed hub at Botwell Green Library and Leisure Centre have been developed in collaboration with Library Services to increase study space and ensure the layout enables both services to maximise utilisation of the additional rooms. Work is in train to complete the necessary surveys and feasibility studies to progress the project to the next phase within the year.
13. Plans for Family Hubs in Ruislip and Harefield have been produced with Youth Services (Ruislip) and Libraries (Harefield) to ensure designs are innovative and creatively maximise the space to best advantage. These are being refined following initial feedback from Planning Services to take account of the recommendations.
14. Plans to develop the basement level area at Ruislip Manor Library for service delivery have been withdrawn due to unresolved issues with dampness and water ingress. Instead, the service will fully utilise the Wren Centre on the Queens Walk site, allowing the relocation of services from the current South Ruislip Children's Centre to this alternative centre on the same site, thereby minimizing any impact on children and families.
15. Reaching families who have yet to access services or do not have a centre nearby continues to be a primary focus for the service. The development of the Family Hub Network has been integral in mapping where services and community resources are available, allowing us to allocate resources efficiently. Activity programmes have been created to include the Heathrow Villages, the hotels surrounding Heathrow, and Northwood. Additionally, partnerships with community groups, such as the International Cafe at Bell Farm, have been established to

support their activities and extend our reach to a wider group of residents.

### **Family Hubs Service Delivery**

16. The first 1,001 days are crucial for a child's development. Parenthood can be wonderful but also challenging. Start for Life offers services and support for expectant parents and families with very young children. This includes advice on pregnancy, health and development, mental health and well-being, infant feeding and breastfeeding, safeguarding, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
17. Specialist services include BCG vaccination clinics, CAMHS under 5's service, clinical support from the Perinatal Mental Health team and PNMH singing group and Parenting Apart Programme for families experiencing conflict or where relationships have broken down. Support for families experiencing low mood or isolation is provided in the home by Homestart Hillingdon.
18. The Family Hub and Children's Centre offer a wide range of activities to support children's development and early learning. Universal groups like baby group, musical babies, story and rhyme time, and stay and play are available to all families. Targeted activities such as Attention Hillingdon, Language for Life, and Stay and Play Plus provide additional support for children needing help with attention, listening, and communication skills.
19. Youth services, both universal and targeted, collaborate with the service and utilize the hubs to deliver a variety of services for children and young people. These include Duke of Edinburgh scheme activities, Young Enterprise, Project evenings, as well as targeted health and well-being services such as LINK and SORTED, and Peer Mentoring and support.
20. Youth Justice, MAPS, and the Family Time (contact) service continue to be based at Uxbridge Family Hub. They use the space for individual meetings, family meetings, and group work as required by their respective remits.
21. Partners from health and children's services, including CAMHS, Health Visiting, Midwifery, PNMH, and Young People's SW Team, continue to provide an enhanced offer of support to families. Specialist services such as the Richmond Fellowship, National Society for Deaf Children, and SENDIASS also offer specific assistance to children and families with particular needs.
22. Family Hubs and Children's Centres are integral to the Stronger Families Partnership, which has been further developed and strengthened over the past year. It facilitates information sharing and signposting across a wide range of corporate, community, and voluntary services and organizations within the borough. A recent partnership event held in Hayes in September saw participation from 130 delegates from various organizations. The event provided partners with opportunities to hear from multiple speakers, enhance their knowledge of available services, access training and support, and network.
23. Hearing from parents and carers about their experiences of using services (or not) and how to improve the offer, is also integral to the development of the service. The newly launched Parent Participation Group recently held its first meeting and was attended by 8 parents. A key discussion theme was access to services and raising awareness of what is on offer, and how parents can support each other. This will be discussed further at future meetings.

### **Early Years Nurseries**

24. The Council continues to provide access to both government-funded and private fee-paying childcare through its three nurseries located in Hayes, South Ruislip, and Uxbridge. Following the outcome of the public consultation held in 2023, Cabinet agreed to seek an alternative provider from the childcare market to continue delivering childcare services at these sites.

25. Officers reviewed options for engaging with the childcare market and gathered the necessary information to market the nurseries. A firm of surveyors was commissioned to compile market valuations, considering the business value and the asset itself.
26. These valuations have been checked and verified to ensure value for money before commissioning a specialist agent to market the nurseries and oversee the provider engagement process.
27. Various providers have expressed interest, and site visits and tours have been conducted to allow prospective providers to view the nurseries and inquire about the business. A deadline was set for final offers, which officers have been clarifying and evaluating before engaging in detailed discussions with a preferred provider regarding lease terms and financials. This work is ongoing, with an expectation that a report will be presented to Cabinet in December for further consideration and decision.
28. The nurseries continue to operate as usual, supporting children in accessing early education and care, including the extended early years entitlements for children aged 9–23 months and 2-year-olds. However, places are capped in line with the centres' staffing capacity.

## **PERFORMANCE DATA**

### **Family Hubs and Children's Centres performance**

29. Engagement with services is monitored through termly data collection and analysis, ensuring that family needs are met efficiently, and resources are optimized. Collaboration among partners enhances service delivery, providing comprehensive support to families. The synergy within the hubs ensures holistic and tailored assistance for specific family needs.
30. Work with Business Intelligence is ongoing to develop performance dashboards using Power BI to show real time access to and take-up of services, as well as detailed termly reports for deeper analysis but these are currently in the early stages.
31. Work is also progressing to consider how to collate data across wider the children's services area, given the current requirement to register for services ceases at age 5, and whilst children's centre take a holistic family view, this evidently changes as children become young people and access services independently.
32. The London Region Family Hub Network is currently developing an outcome framework and will invite London boroughs to pilot the draft and provide feedback. Hillingdon have participated in the focus group developing the framework and have met with colleagues from Business Intelligence to review the draft and consider how this may aid us in developing our own performance dashboard.
33. Key performance data headlines for 2023/24 are as follows:
  - a. 12,289 unique families accessed services
  - b. 70,605 individual attendances (includes repeat attendances)
  - c. 6,776 new families registered
  - d. 42.5% priority families attending
  - e. 622 referrals for additional group work and 1-2-1 support
  - f. 212 children on a Stronger Families plan
  - g. 45 families supported by Portage
  - h. 2,522 contacts for Families Information Service.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT**

34. The Family Hubs model in Hillingdon builds upon existing early years services by expanding the children's centre offerings to support older children and young people. This model

integrates a broader range of delivery partners, thereby enhancing the spectrum of support and services available to children and families.

35. Continuous data analysis and feedback from children, young people, and their families, as well as from professionals and partner agencies, ensure the relevance of services. The locality-based approach allows the service to address the specific needs of residents within our communities.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[London Borough of Hillingdon - Agenda for CABINET on Thursday, 14th September, 2023, 7.00 pm](#)